CHRISTIANITY
UNMASQUED;
OR
UNAVOIDABLE IGNORANCE
PREFERABLE TO
CORRUPT CHRISTIANITY.

A POEM.

In TWENTY-ONE CANTOS.

BY

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Vicar of *South Mimms*, in *Hertfordſhire*.

A Verſe may catch him who a Sermon flies,
And turn Delight into a Sacrifice.
Ludentem laſciva ſeverum, Seria dictu. ART. POET.

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BRITISH MUSEUM

TO THE

RIGHT HONOURABLE

EARL of HILLSBOROUGH,

One of his MAJESTY's

Principal SECRETARIES of STATE,

And One of the LORDS of his

MAJESTY's Moſt Hon. PRIVY COUNCIL.

My LORD,

IN this Addreſs, with which I have the honour to approach your Lordſhip, I ſhall omit that incenſe which is generally offered by Dedicators to their Patrons; being determined to offend neither againſt Reaſon nor Conſcience, in compliance with a cuſtom that has long been complained of as the moſt ſhameful proſtitution of Truth and Candour.

Such a conduct, my Lord, is the genuine ſpring of ſatisfaction to men in the lower claſs of life; nor would the contrary be of any importance to perſons of eminent rank and in public ſtations: For ſuch being entruſted with the direction of ſtate affairs, and conſequently often obliged to act upon reaſons remote from common notice, their actions, in ſpight of the moſt righteous encomiums, will have an obliquity or uprightneſs in proportion to the prevalence of faction.

If the conjunct intereſt of Prince and People, being the rule of action, can be a ſufficient defence againſt obloquy and detraction, the integrity of your Lordſhip's conduct in your preſent ſtation, muſt prevent the moſt florid panegyric, and render every enumeration of worth and excellence unneceſſary and ſuperfluous.

I have been led to requeſt your Lordſhip's Patronage to this Poem, if I may preſume to call it ſuch, chiefly from the deſign of it; which is to place the principles of pure Chriſtianity in ſo obvious a view, that they may the more eaſily be diſtinguiſhed from the knaviſh tricks of Popery; the deluſive ardours of Fanaticiſm, the deſtructive manners of Atheiſm, and from the baneful influence of all. To reſtore the ſpirit of true Chriſtianity

to

to its primitive ſteadineſs and uniformity; to confine it to the intellectual parts of man, and fix it in the receſſes of the ſoul; when its motions will be gentle and compoſed, calm and rational; not floating in the blood; not riſing and falling with the ebbs and tides of humour, or with the various conſtitutions of the animal ſyſtem; but working in a ſilent and ſolemn manner, conformable to the laws of God, and the dictates of ſober Reaſon.

I do not mean, my Lord, that I ought to have addreſſed you as a more competent judge of theſe things, or as a more zealous Friend to pure and unadulterated Chriſtianity, than any I could have found in all the liſt of Nobility. No, my Lord, your poſſeſſing theſe qualities in common with the reſt of your Peers, will more than juſtify my choice. Your ſteady attachment to the eſtabliſhed Church of England; the part of magnificence which you have adopted in building and repairing Houſes of Divine Worſhip, in preference to thoſe mighty vanities of lofty Obeliſks and ſumptuous Statues: In ſhort, the tendency of all your actions to ſome great and public good, and your liberality to every degree of merit, help to ſwell the mighty catalogue of thoſe virtues which muſt make you dear to all who

know you, and perpetuate your name when Obeliſks and Statues ſhall be mouldered into duſt.

If the principles of one ſect had been particularly recommended in preference to any of the numerous branches of Chriſtianity, I ſhould be at a loſs for an apology for this preſumption, in putting it under the umbrage and protection of your Lordſhip's name. But where the cauſe is the cauſe of God alone, and where, in the management of it, truth and impartiality have been religiouſly attended to, the generoſity of your diſpoſition will lead you to balance the defects with the ſincerity of intention; and though none but the moſt ſublime ſentiments, decorated in all the elegance of harmonious numbers, are deſerving of your Lordſhip's ſanction; yet may I flatter myſelf with your favourable acceptance of ſuch notions as I have dreſſed up in a more humble ſtile, as an excuſable mark of eſteem for a Nobleman ſo juſtly honoured with the confidence of his Prince; ſo upright in the diſcharge of every duty that tends to the welfare of his country, and who, for that reaſon, muſt be the *Decus & Præſidium*, the proper ornament, as well as protector, of every attempt to diſ-

abuſe

abuſe the ſincere and reform the corrupt part of mankind.

It cannot be otherwiſe, my Lord, but I muſt be attacked from many different quarters; it is the unavoidable conſequence of that great variety in the powers of human reaſon. That which appears trivial to one man, will carry the force of conviction to the apprehenſions of another. Doctrines that are ſupported with the utmoſt vehemence by one ſet of men, are decried with equal violence by another. Revealed truths receive their force and efficacy from the predominant paſſions of men; ſuch as will influence the ſober and thinking, will not proſelyte the licentious and debauched. He, therefore, who endeavours to take the Chriſtian Religion from its primitive ſource, the Holy Scriptures, and who attempts to ſtrip it from the additions of knavery, the miſtakes of zeal, and the reproaches of infidelity, muſt expect a plentiful ſhare of ſplenetick abuſe from thoſe whoſe ſores are too tender for ſuch a probe. Gebal, and Ammon, and Amalek; the Philiſtines, with thoſe that dwell at Tyre; Rakes, Libertines, Fanaticks and Jeſuits; Jews, Turks, Infidels and Hereticks; old and young, male and female, all unite in the noble deſign of crying down the man, who dares to lay

open the impoſitions, ridicule the folly, or condemn the prophaneneſs, of Infidelity, Puritaniſm, and Popery: Who attempts to diſſuade the world from an implicit credulity in modern miracles, from a viſionary chace after exotic revelations, and from the looſe principles of epicurean ſophiſtry.

As for the cenſure of genuine Criticks, thoſe I mean who have abilities to correct what they have judgment to condemn, I am under no apprehenſions about it. Becauſe ſuch have all the tenderneſs of an Engliſh Jury; who, conſidering the imperfections of humanity, never fail to make gracious allowances for thoſe faults that are not attended with malevolence.

It is too well known, my Lord, that Chriſtianity is now ſo involved with ceremonious trappings, ſo interwoven with traditionary tenets, and ſo blended with unſcriptural doctrines, that ſhe ſeems to have had the ſame fate of the Egyptian Oſiris, whom the giant Typhon hewed into a thouſand pieces, and diſperſed to the four winds. Thoſe, therefore, who have hitherto been deſirous to find, and reſolute to ſeek after her, have been obliged to pick her up piecemeal, as Æetes did the ſcattered limbs of the mangled Abſyrtus; though it is doubtful if all the parts are, or ever will be found, until her

her Maſter's ſecond coming, who ſhall collect together every disjointed member, and mould them into the lovely form of celeſtial perfection.

But as human endeavours muſt co-operate with divine grace to forward our ſalvation, ſo we, by the eye of Reaſon, ſhould endeavour to penetrate the gloomy ſhades of illuſion, trace Chriſtianity through the mazes of allegory and metaphor, and bring her forth arrayed, as near as poſſible, in the plain and decent ornaments of primitive holineſs. For though we may not be able to free her entirely from diſguiſe, yet ſo much of her fantaſtical and ſuperfluous attire may be ſtripped off, as may leave her neither ſtarch nor ſlovenly, but cloathed in a garment of ſo much light, as will be ſufficient to conduct us through this wilderneſs of ſin, into the land of eternal reſt and glory.

The moſt powerful argument, my Lord, againſt this undertaking, and which, I think, I am more immediately concerned to obviate, is the facetious manner in which the ſubject is handled. But when it is conſidered that every reader has his peculiar taſte, and that what may captivate one, will have no effect upon another, this formidable objection will dwindle into meer cavil. There is no fixed ſtandard, as I know of, my Lord, to determine the mode of handling a ſubject.

I preſume, therefore, the graveſt may be treated with ſatyrical irony, as among the numberleſs rovings of mens fancies, it may influence many, who could not be prevailed upon to read more formal compoſitions, ſuch being too frequently ſtigmatized with the character of pedantry.

Nor, indeed, my Lord, is ſuch a method repugnant to the ſevereſt rules of chriſtian gravity. We are taught, by inſpired examples, to be either jocoſe, or tart, as occaſion may require, in conveying reproof and admonition, of which many inſtances might be given, could I ſuppoſe any ſo ignorant as not to know them. But if an ingenuous raillery was to be totally exploded, and nothing but blunt arguments admitted in defence of Religion, Chriſtianity would be deprived of a very ſucceſsful method, which, in all other caſes, is made uſe of to inſtruct the ſtupid, rouſe the negligent, and correct the abandoned; for reaſon, under the diſguiſe of wit, and clad in a poetical garb, has often brought men to a better mind, when its dictates, dreſſed in dumpiſh ſtrains, and dogmatical inſolence, have been treated with ſcorn and contempt.

Beſides, my Lord, Ridicule, kept within the bounds of piety and juſtice, is the beſt method to confront errors, eſpecially in thoſe who

who are obſtinately blind to the cleareſt light of reaſon: For to argue ſincerely with ſuch, will ſerve only to raiſe their conceit to a higher pitch; whereas a facetious ſneer often proves an antidote to obſtinacy, and a reproach to impudence; it confounds the Sceptic and Sophiſter, and derides them into their ſenſes. And if the patrons of Vice and error have propagated their pernicious tenets by the help of poetical ſtrains, and humorous repreſentations, ſurely the patrons of Virtue may, in the ſame manner, endeavour to adorn the truth, and call forth the nobleſt paſſions of the heart.

In the laſt Canto, where I have endeavoured to give a ſhort and comprehenſive view of unadulterated Chriſtianity, I have altered the ſtile to Epic Poetry, it being more ſuitable to the gravity and ſublimity of the ſubject.

If any notions, that border upon heterodoxy, ſhould be found diſſeminated through this Poem, they are not mine, either by birth or adoption, for I claim no merit as an Author, my Lord, but that of putting the proſe opinions of ancient and modern Divines into a poetical dreſs. I have ſtated the arguments for and againſt the theſis, and where I had not the evident authority of Scripture to decide, I have left it to every man's

man's judgment, to take which ſide he pleaſes.

And if in this, my Lord, I have, as it was ſaid of Doctor Cudworth, ſtarted objections that have not been ſufficiently cleared, they will be found in points of ſpeculation, in which our church admits a latitude of judgment; ſuch, in particular, as the articles of an identical reſurrection, and an eternity of torments, the mode and duration of which have never been determined by our church, or any other that I know of, conſequently may be looked upon in the light of ſcholaſtic problems. But if, after all my precaution, any thing has been advanced not ſtrictly correſponding with the doctrines of the Eſtabliſhed Church, or with the ſentiments of wiſe and good men, I wiſh it unſaid with all my heart, and ſhall be ready to retract it immediately upon conviction.

And now, my Lord, having finiſhed what I thought neceſſary to ſay relative to this Poem, give me leave to embrace this opportunity in mentioning an affair, that is, in ſome meaſure, connected with the ſubject, and greatly ſo with your Lordſhip's concerns; I mean, the great diſadvantages that the Eſtabliſhed Church of England labours under, in his Majeſty's American dominions: And if in this I ſhould diſcloſe a few diſagreeable truths,

truths, I mean not to become any body's enemy, but to provoke the zeal of thoſe who have power and inclination to redreſs every reaſonable complaint.

If we ſurvey the Colonies in a collective body, my Lord, it will appear that Fanatics, Deiſts, and Atheiſts, out-number the members of the church of England by a great majority. The firſt are governed by a ſovereign contempt for the calm and rational ſervice of our church in particular; and the laſt by a diſlike for revealed religion, and the myſterious truths of the Goſpel in general: Theſe, ſetting up the light of nature as their guide, and ſatisfying their conſciences with a religion purely moral; whilſt thoſe are guided by ecſtatic fervours, and exclude every moral obligation, as being neither eſſential to a Chriſtian, nor a means of ſalvation.

This, however, is no more than what is too common here; but then, my Lord, here we have an able and exemplary Miniſtry to ſtem the torrent of profaneneſs and folly; whereas, in thoſe parts, there is a want not only of an able, but of an exemplary Clergy, to ſupport the drooping ſpirits of the Eſtabliſhed Church; which, maugre all the efforts of the different ſocieties that are formed to ſupport her, has been in a retrogreſſive ſtate, to my certain knowledge, theſe twenty years.

For

For how can it be otherwiſe, my Lord, ſince ſhe has to encounter, not only the numerous Sectaries that migrated there during the Uſurpation, now broken into a multitude of ſubdivided Congregations; but the Preſbyterians, Papiſts, Deiſts, and Atheiſts, however diſagreeing, and contrary to each other in faith and practice, are ready upon all occaſions, and upon no occaſion, to unite in decrying the principles of the eſtabliſhed Church, and in exclaiming againſt the mercenary and unſanctified herd of her Clergy.

Whatever may be the cauſe of theſe conjunct efforts, my Lord, whether diſguſt at the moderate and pious principles for which our Church is ſingularly diſtinguiſhed, or envy for the independent though ſcanty pittance annexed to the Prieſthood, or whether the abandoned lives of ſome of the Clergy may have contributed to this oppoſition, the difficulty of the defence is the ſame, and calls for every rational method to weaken and defeat ſo iniquitous a union.

There is no Religion, my Lord, how near ſoever it approaches to divine perfection, that can poſſibly prevail independent of human endeavours, or without the expence of repeated miracles; and as it is generally

generally allowed that theſe laſt have ceaſed, the firſt muſt be neceſſary of courſe.

I do not plead, my Lord, for any advantages more than what are given to the eſtabliſhed Church of every free nation; but to put the Church of England upon a level with the Boſtonian Preſbytery, and with every other Sect in America, certainly can be no very unconſcionable requeſt. This, my Lord, is all that is required; and yet this reaſonable demand, which is no more than taking a prudential ſtep for her own ſafety, has been exclaimed againſt as unneceſſary, and tending to no other purpoſe but to enſlave and tyrannize over the conſciences of the good people of America.

I make no doubt, my Lord, but you are before hand with me, and underſtand me to mean the deſign, which has been too long delayed, of ſending a Biſhop to America; I mean a Suffragan with ſpiritual power only. Certainly the arguments that have been made uſe of to divert the Government from ſo righteous a purpoſe, muſt have been looked upon in their proper light, as being the diſingenuous dictates of a ſet of men, whoſe fundamental principle it is, never to ſubmit to any rules or forms of worſhip which are eſtabliſhed by publick authority, though they exact the moſt

rigorous

rigorous obedience to thoſe of their provincial and claſſical Synods.

I believe there is not the leaſt doubt of the propriety of the meaſure. But why is it not requeſted? your Lordſhip may aſk; why does not ſome Houſe of Burgeſſes petition the King for it? Not to remark, my Lord, that whatever is neceſſary to the Conſtitution either of Church or State, ought not to be kept back for want of a formal requiſition; if to the number of Sectaries and Deiſts we add the Members of the Church of England, who are pre-poſſeſſed with the notion that there can be no Biſhop without his Eccleſiaſtical Courts, and who have annexed the idea of an Inquiſition to thoſe Courts, we ſhall ſcarce find two men in any Houſe of Burgeſſes to ſecond a motion for ſuch a Petition. If, therefore, no Biſhop is to be ſent till requeſted by ſome American Houſe of Burgeſſes, I think I may venture, without pretending to any uncommon ſhare of preſcience, to pronounce a ſhort period to the Church of England in thoſe parts.

It is not only for the ſake of conferring Orders on men of approved morals there, and filling up the Cures as faſt as they become vacant, without the delay of twelve or eighteen months, which it ſometimes takes before a perſon can be ordained and ſent from England,

England, during which time the Congregation is expoſed to the deluſions of other Sectaries, but it is to prevent the impoſitions that the Biſhop of London is liable to, from the partial and indiſcrete recommendations of men, that are too frequently ſent to his Lordſhip for Holy Orders; and which, I will venture to ſay, is the principal ſource of that immorality too juſtly complained of in the Epiſcopal Clergy abroad.

But, my Lord, if this cannot be immediately done, if the temper of the times will not admit of an American Biſhop as yet, and there is a neceſſity for letting the eſtabliſhed Church languiſh ſtill longer, for fear of giving offence to the intolerate principles of teſty Zealots; yet there are two things which have been, and may be done again to remedy, in ſome meaſure, the diſadvantages complained of. The firſt lies with the Biſhop of London, the laſt with the Society for Propagating the Goſpel in Foreign Parts.

I do not know, my Lord, by what preſcription America became part of the Dioceſan Charge of the See of London. I fancy it has been founded on cuſtom; the trade with the firſt ſettlers being confined chiefly to London, they were as neceſſarily led to apply to that Biſhop in all their ſpiritual concerns, as to a Merchant, or the Miniſter

of

of State, in their temporal. But be that as it may, it is no profit, but a conſiderable expence to the Biſhop. And it was ſtill a greater expence, before the tranſlation of Doctor Sherlock to this See; for that Biſhop (I do not know for what reaſon) neglected to take out the Commiſſion to qualify him for appointing Commiſſioners in America, and none of his ſucceſſors have done it ſince. I am told, my Lord, there is ſome expence attending it; if there is, it ought certainly to be diſcharged by his Majeſty, who grants the Commiſſion by virtue of his Supremacy. For it is enough that the Biſhops of London ſhould be at all the trouble, and an expence of about three hundred pounds annually, which I heard Biſhop Sherlock ſay it coſt him, in tranſacting the eccleſiaſtical affairs of that Continent.

But let the expence fall where it will, my Lord, the Commiſſion ought certainly to be taken out, and a Commiſſary appointed in every Colony, with full power to cenſure immoralities in the Clergy, and to ſuſpend them, *ex officio*, till the Biſhop's pleaſure is known. This would bring them under the ſame predicament with the Paſtors of other Sects, who hold their paſtoral office by the good graces of the people, and are therefore obliged to be circumſpect in conduct, by the tie of intereſt, as well as of duty.

There

There can be no doubt, my Lord, but intereſt has a much larger ſhare than principle, in forming the manners of mankind, taken in the majority. For we cannot ſuppoſe that the Diſſenting Clergy are of a more angelic texture than thoſe of the Church of England; nor are the principles of their Church more pure than thoſe of ours. No, it is the deſire of keeping their ſtation, and rendering themſelves worthy of a call to a more profitable cure, upon a vacancy, that is the chief incentive to their regularity of conduct; whereas almoſt all the livings of the eſtabliſhed Church in America are upon a par, and are held as independent freeholds; ſo that the Incumbent has nothing to hope for as the reward of virtue, or to fear as the puniſhment of vice, on this ſide of eternity.

Beſides this neceſſary check upon the Ordained, my Lord, the Biſhop of London will have a moral certainty of the truth of thoſe teſtimoniums brought to his Lordſhip by thoſe who come to be ordained, authenticated by the concurrent teſtimony of his Commiſſary; who, being upon the ſpot, muſt know the moral character of the candidate, and the integrity of his vouchers. This will fruſtrate many of thoſe attempts to impoſe upon his Lordſhip, and prevent thoſe uneaſy

ſenſations which humanity inſpires, when duty obliges him to give a repulſe.

The cuſtom of ordaining perſons who have been educated in diſſenting principles, and that without any other aſſurance of their conformity but their bare ſubſcription, has done an infinite prejudice to the eſtabliſhed Church in America. For not to remark that Election and Reprobation, with other doctrines in which our Church and theirs are not agreed, are never forgotten; ſuch perſons, my Lord, lying always under the ſuſpicion of inſincerity, in order to demonſtrate their thorough converſion, are the moſt ſtrenuous ſticklers for every punctilio of the rubrick. So that rather than accept of parents for ſponſors, they will ſuffer the child to go without baptiſm, and lay the parents under the neceſſity, for want of indifferent ſponſors, to apply for that Sacrament to the firſt Diſſenting Clergyman they meet.

I have known the beſt and wealthieſt family in a pariſh turned over to a Meeting by this means. The wife, being a Diſſenter, taking an advantage of ſuch a refuſal, ſolicited her huſband to let her carry the child to the Meeting; he was a long time inflexible; but after many fruitleſs entreaties uſed with the eſtabliſhed Miniſter, he at length complied, ſaying, "He could not think of adhering

adhering to that Church, which made Baptiſm neceſſary, and at the ſame time ſo difficult to be come at." Which words I often heard him repeat ſome years after, when his family was grown up, and multiplied ſo as to be the principal ſupport of the neighbouring Meeting.

Though it is hard to conceive, my Lord, how a man can be true to the principles of a Church to which he is a ſtranger, when he was not true to that in which he was educated; yet all theſe Conformiſts may not be ſo totally indifferent as to the truth and excellency of the religion they profeſs, as not to enquire whether the principles of one religion may not be more agreeable to reaſon and divine perfection than thoſe of another: Therefore, ſome of them may act from conſcience; God forbid otherwiſe; but it is much to be feared that the major part of them are governed by intereſt; of which I ſhall give your Lordſhip a ſtriking example.

A certain Governor of South Carolina, out of a miſtaken zeal for the Church of England, left in his will a thouſand pounds ſterling to be given to ten Diſſenting Clergymen, who ſhould take Orders, and accept of livings in that Province. There were ſoon claimants for ſuch a ſum. The ten went to England, were ordained, and returned to re-

ceive the premium. But the misfortune of it was, the Governor did not mention in his will where this thouſand pound was to be found, and the Executors did not chuſe to look for it; ſo that, for a reward, theſe Conformiſts were forced to extend their views to the other world.

The Society for propagating the Goſpel in Foreign Parts hath done much, and have it in their power to do ſtill much more, in extending the borders of the Church of England in America. It is certainly one of the moſt glorious and ſublime undertakings; and did they diſpoſe of their Miſſionaries with as much judgment as they chuſe them, it would excel all other charities, inaſmuch as it is more godlike to provide for the immortal ſoul, than for the periſhing body. But the caſe is, my Lord, the Miſſionaries in general are fixed in congregations that are well able to provide for their Miniſters independent of the Society, and who would never want Clergymen, though they were left to themſelves. Whereas congregations of back ſettlers, who are poor in purſe, poor in principle, and poor in the knowledge of revealed religion, are left to the light of nature, or, to what is more bewildering, the *ignis fatuus* of enthuſiaſm; for they ſeldom hear a ſermon, except from a ſet of ſelf-originated

ginated and vagrant Preachers, who get a better livelihood by traverſing thoſe back ſettlements as inſpired teachers, than by following the plough. And theſe poor people have no alternative, but that baneful one of picking up Clergymen who have been routed out of other pariſhes for their immoralities.

I could readily point out the places, my Lord, where Miſſionaries now are, and ought not to be; but ſuch a proceeding might draw upon me the ill-will of ſome of the Miſſionaries, with whom I ſhould wiſh to hold a friendly correſpondence. Beſides, my Lord, there is no neceſſity for ſo much particularity. The Society muſt know, that the moſt numerous, wealthy, as well as beſt inſtructed part of the inhabitants, are, for the moſt part, ſettled within two or three days journey of the ſea coaſt. Here there is an agreeable aſſociation, and frequent intercourſe with each other; the conveniences of life are plenty; proper aſſiſtance is to be had in caſe of ſickneſs; and, what is not a little to be regarded, both life and property are ſecure from the invaſions of a faithleſs and ſavage race. But in the uncultivated and dreary foreſts on the frontiers, the inhabitants are expoſed to many hardſhips and inconveniences, to which the lower ſettlers are ſtrangers.

ſtrangers. They are under inceſſant apprehenſions from the treachery of Indians, deſtitute of every thing that may be called neceſſary, though not eſſential to life; have no aſſiſtance in caſes of ſickneſs, or accidental fractures; Nature muſt obſerve her primitive parſimony there, muſt ſubmit to a cheap and ſcanty diet, and be her own phyſician.

Under ſuch diſadvantages as theſe, my Lord, it muſt certainly require ſomething more than a ſcanty pittance, to induce a Clergyman to preach the Goſpel in thoſe parts. If zeal is called in, then, indeed, my Lord, a hair ſhirt, with a ſtaff and ſcrip, might be ſufficient; but I put this out of the queſtion, knowing that ſuch is difficult to be found. For with too much truth it is ſaid,

No Jeſuit ever took in hand,
To plant a church in barren land;
Nor ever thought it worth the while,
A Swede or Ruſs to reconcile;
For where there is no ſtore of wealth,
Souls are not worth the charge of health.

I am ſuppoſing the Clergy of every denomination the ſame; to have the ſame wants, infirmities, and feelings, that other men

men have; and, upon that ſuppoſition, few or none of them will expoſe themſelves to hardſhips and dangers, which may be avoided without prejudice to their temporal affairs. Therefore, my Lord, if the Society would be prevailed upon to withdraw their ſalaries from all pariſhes that are within two hundred miles of the ſea, and fix them in pariſhes beyond thoſe limits, to which the preſent Miſſionaries ought to have the liberty of going, if they pleaſe; I will take it upon me to ſay, ſuch a ſtep will be attended with the moſt happy conſequences, and more effectually anſwer the end of that moſt excellent charity.

And now, my Lord, having apologized for this Poem, as well as for the preſumption of ſending it into the world under your Patronage; and having ſatisfied my conſcience in giving your Lordſhip a hint or two, how the intereſt of the eſtabliſhed Church may be forwarded in America; I ſhall add no more, but my hearty prayers, that it will pleaſe God to bleſs your Lordſhip with health, and length of days, and to proſper your Lordſhip's endeavours for the advancement of Religion, the honour of your Sovereign, and the happineſs of your Fellow-ſubjects. This, my Lord, as it

is

is a debt of gratitude, ſo it ſhall be faithfully paid by the ardent deſires of

My Lord,

Your Lordſhip's

moſt humble, and

moſt obedient Servant,

BRITISH
13 DE 77
MUSEUM

MICHAEL SMITH.

Chriſtianity Unmaſqued, &c.

The ARGUMENT *of the* FIRST CANTO.

Ignorance than Knowledge better;
The Church of Rome has forg'd a letter,
And do aver that Jeſus penn'd it,
After he had to Heaven aſcended.

CANTO I.

IT was the wiſeſt man's belief,
That in much wiſdom there's much grief,
That he who knowledge does purſue,
Augments with that his ſorrow too.
Since knowledge, then, content denies,
The ignorant are only wiſe;
Et ſcire nihil, I may ſay,
Eſt vita jucundiſſima.
This the omniſcient God foreſaw,
Which made him firſt preſcribe a law,

To father Adam and his wife,
On no leſs penalty than life,
That they with care that fruit eſchew,
Which on the Tree of Knowledge grew.
If ſacred records we may truſt,
Chriſt wrote but once, and that in duſt;
And did it with his finger then,
Nor us'd he paper, ink, or pen;
He us'd them not, at leaſt, before he
Aſcended from this earth to glory;
And though the Popiſh legends quote,
A letter which from Heaven he wrote,
To Agabus, a King or Prophet,
True Proteſtants know nothing of it;
And till they ſhew us how he ſent it,
We muſt conclude they did invent it.
And this doth prove th' illiterate,
May th' happieſt be in any ſtate.

The ARGUMENT *of the* SECOND CANTO.

Miſchiefs that had from Types their date;
No Printing in the Turkiſh State:
Britons united and ſincere
'Till Types and Cæſar landed here.

CANTO II.

IF the advantages and uſe,
Could counterbalance the abuſe
Of Types, then Chriſt, I ſhrewdly gueſs,
Had been th' inventer of the preſs;
Becauſe it would, in half the time,
Promulge his laws in ev'ry clime;
And now the wandring Caffres might
Enjoy the glorious Goſpel light;
And the exiſtence of the ſoul,
Hereafter, might have reach'd the Pole.

But what muſt be the conſequence,
Should Chriſt to thoſe his laws diſpenſe?
As in falſe knowledge they increaſe,
(Which probably would be the caſe,)
Then the perverſion of Chriſtianity,
Might tend to rob them of humanity;

And peace and concord be no more,
Where all was harmony before:
The father might renounce the ſon,
For diff'ring in opinion;
The honeſt heart might be perplex'd,
About the meaning of a text;
Whilſt ev'ry ſelf-ſufficient man,
Would like, diſlike, condemn, and ſcan,
And when his mind was fix'd, would labour,
To warp th' opinion of his neighbour;
And if his arguments ſhould fail,
Then perſecution muſt prevail;
For which he'd ſhew a precedent
In ev'ry Chriſtian government.
When Cæſar Britons firſt ſubdu'd,
He found them ignorant and rude;
Of manners ſimple, yet ſincere,
Their dealings upright, plain, and clear;
In war courageous, prudent, brave,
Abhorr'd the very name of ſlave;
True to their Country, and its cauſe,
Attach'd to Virtue, and her laws;
At leaſt as ample in degree,
As moſt thoſe Britons now we ſee;
And their Religion as ſublime,
As then prevail'd in any clime:

They had their Druids, Bards, and Prieſts,
With ſolemn myſteries, and feaſts;
And were inſtructed by thoſe Bards,
To look hereafter for rewards.
They had Pænates, and their Lares,
And thoſe both *Feminæ & Mares*;
Beſides their *Gentium Dii Majorum*,
And they devoutly did adore 'em.
They knew no ſects, nor broils religious,
But, what is ſtill the more prodigious,
They did preſerve, as Cæſar ſaith,
A uniformity of faith.
But printing once familiar grown,
Bleſt uniformity is flown;
Whilſt books of every ſect and faction
Have fill'd the kingdom with diſtraction.
The Turkiſh politicks prevent
All printing in their government:
Still, in their way, they're as devout,
As we learn'd Chriſtians, and as ſtout;
Yet, from the cottage to the throne,
Religious branglings are unknown.
But ſend a Printer there, with's Devil,
They'll introduce the ſpecious evil;
For books by theſe being multiply'd,
The ſtate in parties will divide;

They'll diſunite the Beglerbegs,
About the mode of eating eggs;
If at the ſmall end or the great,
Will prove a matter of debate.
  Gunpowder firſt, or Fame's a liar,
Had its diſcov'ry from a Friar;
And then a Soldier, out of ſpite,
Firſt brought the printing art to light.
Which came from Heaven, or which from Hell,
Would poſe the Devil himſelf to tell.
But this we know, that Chriſt gave birth
To no ſuch evils whilſt on earth.

The ARGUMENT *of the* THIRD CANTO.

The firſt Apoſtles, and their art,
T' inform the mind, and mend the heart;
With all the modes of modern zeal,
Since practis'd for the Church's weal.

CANTO III.

WHEN Chriſt his fav'rite twelve elected,
The ſons of Sadoc were neglected;
Nor Scribe nor Phariſee had place
Amongſt thoſe happy ſons of grace;
Excepting one, the bleſſed dozen,
From huts and fiſhing boats were choſen;
By ſuch mean inſtruments we find,
Salvation publiſh'd to mankind:
Men ſo depreſs'd, and deſtitute
Of riches, learning, and repute;
So mean their calling and their birth,
They ſeem'd the ſcum of all the earth;
That was it not by Heaven decreed,
The work ſhould in their hands ſucceed,
They had miſcarry'd in their miſſion,
And ſunk beneath the oppoſition.

St. Paul pronounc'd himſelf a fool,
Though vers'd in ev'ry Chriſtian rule;
And fooliſhneſs that preaching nam'd,
Which th' doctrines of the Croſs proclaim'd:
And nothing does he more decry
Than Gnoſtics vain philoſophy.
Knowledge, he ſays, does pride create,
And ſpoils the world with vain deceit;
And tells us, what is ſtill more odd,
The world by wiſdom knew not God.
He means that wiſdom taught in ſchools,
Which prov'd the teachers were but fools;
Which ſhew'd their gods were worſe than men,
That ſhameleſs ſinn'd, and ſinn'd again.
Reſtore us, then, the golden age,
When neither ſects nor parties rage;
There let us live and let us die,
In primitive ſimplicity.
Men in their dotage are call'd wiſe,
Becauſe with babes they ſympathize;
And whom the world as fools proſcribe,
Are rank'd among the fleecy tribe:
In this we Chriſt's example keep,
Who ſtiles his faithful ſervants ſheep.
How comes it, then, that Chriſtendom
A den of tigers is become?

Is modern Rome alone to blame,
That men are Chriſtians but in name?
That though of ſheep they wear the coats,
They're in their nature wolves and goats?
Look every where, alas, you'll find
The traces of a bloody mind;
Whether you croſs the Tweed or Tiber,
To view Religion, and deſcribe her;
You'll find her in an ill condition,
Impatient ſtill of oppoſition;
And ſo elate with ſpir'tual pride,
Infallibility beſide,
That ſhe alone muſt rule the roaſt,
Directed by the Holy Ghoſt;
Then woe to ſuch as dare oppoſe her,
Or with erroneous tenets noſe her;
For ſuch ſhe piouſly reclaims
With halters, gibbets, racks, and flames.
By ſuch as theſe did Biſhop Bonner
Once vindicate the church's honour;
Make faithful converts to the Pope,
By th' pow'rful argument of rope;
And, by the help of fire and faggots,
Eſtabliſh'd his religious maggots.
Latimer, Cranmer, Ridley, Huſs,
Were treated by the Papiſts thus;

Whilſt Calvin us'd this conflagration
To purify the Reformation;
In pious zeal gave the quietus
To the arch-heretic Servetus.
Is this the effect, then, of that fruit,
To change us from the man to brute;
And make us one another tear
In pieces, like a ſavage bear?
Or can there, in reality,
Two ſorts of Chriſt's religion be;
The one in man's opinion grounded,
And t'other on the Scripture founded?
With ign'rance, then, let me be curs'd,
Not of the laſt, but of the firſt.

The ARGUMENT *of the* FOURTH CANTO.

Of Savages the diſpoſition,
And cruelty of th' Inquiſition:
The Chriſtian ſcheme at firſt deſign'd
To ſave, now made to damn mankind.

CANTO IV.

ADAM, we're told, before he taſted
The fruit forbidden, like a beaſt did
Ramble, unrob'd, all over Eden,
And ſo did Eve, although a maiden;
For men religiouſly believe,
That neither Adam, nor dame Eve,
Before they taſted of the tree,
Knew ſhame between the waiſt and knee.
But what by that ſame tree's deſign'd,
Let thoſe who know, inform mankind;
For I my ignorance confeſs,
I neither know, nor will I gueſs.
Myſterious fruit! that could diſpenſe
Knowledge unknown to innocence;
Which ſuch ſtrange efficacy had,
To ſhew that mankind ſhould be clad;

When

When neither Adam, nor his wife,
Had ſeen a coat ſince they had life;
Except the Dev'l, like modern beau,
This knowledge did to Eve beſtow;
Or modern dreſs'd aërial belle,
The faithful confidant of hell,
Inveigled Adam from his bride,
Then did his nakedneſs deride.
For ſearch the text, you'll not find in't
A human being to give the hint;
And nature, in its pureſt dreſs,
From head to foot is nakedneſs;
For ev'ry beaſt, *hujus telluris*,
Goes *naturalibus in puris.*

The Tropic Indians, and the Blacks,
Do wear no cloaths upon their backs;
But ſhew their ſkin, though black as ſoot,
From crown of head to ſole of foot;
Their innocence of Nature knows
Nor uſe, nor the abuſe of cloaths;
And yet thoſe ſable tribes, I trow,
As virtuous are as we are now;
As free from luſt, deceit, or guile,
As thoſe who nakedneſs revile;
And Chriſtians both in thought and deed,
More pure than we, except in Creed.

An Indian's conduct in the wood,
Will make this obſervation good.
When by the help of bow, or gun,
He kills a deer, then in the ſun
He does th' expanded hide expoſe
To dry, and on his hunting goes.
If chance directs to this ſame ſpot
An Indian, he will touch it not;
But this, if Chriſtian hunter ſpies,
He bears away the lucky prize.
Ye caſuiſtic ſchoolmen, ſay, then,
Which is the Chriſtian, which the Heathen?
No brother here doth kill a brother,
Nor perſecute they one another;
No maſſacres, nor devaſtations,
Contaminate thoſe happy nations;
No blind obedience to decrees
Are there enforc'd on penalties;
No damning, ſinking, biting, ſcratching,
For doctrines of infernal hatching;
Here is no cath'lic orthodoxy,
Whoſe virtues moſt in blows and knocks lye;
No Pope to ſend them to perdition,
Nor tortures of an Inquiſition.
—— Inſatiate gulph of Chriſtian blood!
Scourge to the wretched and the good;

Where

Where crimſon Prelate mounts the chair,
With heart of ſtone and adder's ear,
And there with merc'leſs triumph reigns,
Like Lucifer in his domains.
—— Oh dire effects of erring zeal!
Which makes men no compunction feel;
But perſecutes to death the man
Who ſerves his God the beſt he can;
Thus puniſhing the uſe of Reaſon,
That light divine, as ſpir'tual treaſon;
That frail authority does place
In room of truth, and rage for grace;
That cruelty denounces kindneſs,
And pure illumination blindneſs;
By pride and obſtinacy curs'd,
Thus changing good things for the worſt.
So toads, from the ſame ſhrubs and trees
Do poiſon make, and honey bees.
Did Chriſt promote his Goſpel ſo?
Or his Apoſtles after? No.
He drew no pow'r from Heav'n t' oppoſe
The helliſh malice of his foes;
Nor did he ever once compel
Their faith, or threaten them with Hell;
All cruelty he did diſown,
Reaſon'd with all, but puniſh'd none;

Re-

Reclaiming people from their blunders,
By arguments, and working wonders.
And thus the Apoſtles, arm'd with pray'rs,
And reaſons too, oppos'd gainſayers.
They once, indeed, before inſpir'd,
Would fain ſome Heretics have fir'd;
But from that moment always ſtrove,
To proſelyte the world by love.
So far from uſing people ill,
Or forcing them againſt their will,
Where'er they went, they men forbade,
To credit what they did or ſaid,
'Till reaſon firſt they did apply,
To judge their faith and doctrines by.
Such was the temper and behaviour
Of the Diſciples, and our Saviour;
Such was the Goſpel then reveal'd,
It wanted neither ſword nor ſhield;
Whilſt tyranny and ignorance
The modern Goſpel muſt advance;
And which, like Mah'met's impious word,
Muſt be ſupported by the ſword;
And wants authority's defence,
Againſt th' attacks of common ſenſe.
Strange there ſhould grow ſuch diff'rent fruit,
Both ſweet and bitter, from one root;

That what the world was to redeem,
Should prove a perſecuting ſcheme;
And by Hell's foſtering and nurſing,
Should turn a bleſſing into curſing.
But ſo one breath in organ blown,
Can make a harſh and mellow tone.
The pow'r of Midas, too, was ſuch,
He alter'd all things with a touch.
  But rather ign'rant let me be,
Than thus to know Chriſt'anity;
'Stead of ſuch faith, let me have works,
And ſtand the chance of Jews and Turks.

The ARGUMENT *of the* FIFTH CANTO.

The mode of Councils to diſgrace,
And turn a Biſhop out of place;
With the dogmatic tyranny
Of blinding men diſpos'd to ſee.

CANTO V.

IS this th' unhappy fruit of all,
The councils œcumenical,
T' adult'rate thus the church with lyes,
Or with invented myſteries?
Read, and you'll find the goſpel law
Without obſcurity, or flaw;
As plain as God to man could ſhew,
At leaſt as plain as man ſhould know;
For God muſt always take delight
To ſee his creatures acting right;
A taſk to which none would be able,
Were laws divine impenetrable.
Mankind had better be without
A law, than of its meaning doubt;
For that's a uſeleſs revelation
That wants a human explication;

And this we're told we cannot hope,
But from a Synod, or the Pope;
Who both may be in league with Hell,
Since neither is infallible.

From hence the cuſtom firſt aroſe,
Of calling Councils to depoſe
Some Prelate het'rodoxical,
Whoſe holy life had been his fall;
In which the better to ſucceed,
They always pos'd him with a Creed.
Or elſe of faith ſome ſtrange confeſſion,
Invented in ſome holy ſeſſion;
Which if to own he dares refuſe,
Deſtruction inſtantly enſues.

This group of Prieſts, met in a herd,
May with that monſter be compar'd,
Which Horace drew to ridicule,
The compoſition of a fool;†
Whoſe writings, like a ſick man's dreams,
Are always pregnant with extremes;
Where oft, in gentle nature's ſpite,
Fierce tigers and mild lambs unite.
So in thoſe Councils you may find
Tempers of het'rogeneous kind;
Which being united, place before us
The motly beaſt ſuppos'd by Horace.

† See Commencement of Hor. Art. Poet.

This

This mode of fabricating Creeds,
Such univerſal rancour breeds,
That in thoſe Councils all the members
Are turbulent as new blown embers.
Such as preferment had in view,
Were always ſtarting tenets new ;
Whilſt ſome, with the ſame plan of heart, did
Oppoſe thoſe tenets as they ſtarted.
Thus hopes, and jealouſies, and cares,
United all in ſowing tares ;
And each to make the world a bubble,
Contributed his ſhare of ſtubble,
Which holy Pope, or elſe his proxy,
Did canonize as orthodoxy.
Such Doctors of polemic ſkill,
The world with deſolation fill ;
And ſuch dictators peremptory,
Eclipſe the Chriſtian Church's glory.
For they impoſe their ſpeculations,
With ſuch ſeverity on nations ;
And claim th' aſſent of all mankind,
Without conviction of the mind ;
Such hard conditions of communion,
Diſſolve, of courſe, all ſocial union.
For when the Chriſtian code becomes
As bulky as Aquinas' ſums,

 And

And articles of faith abound,
Wherein ſalvation muſt be found;
Who ſees not here what large proviſions
Are made for infinite diviſions?
But when I find that Cicero's
Orations, wrapt about the toes,
Can cure the gout, or ſet a bone,
Why then, but not till then, I'll own
A poignant rod, laid on ſevere,
The human intellects will clear;
So far, that diff'rent educations,
Sexes, int'reſts, inclinations;
And bodies of a diff'rent craſis,
Will all approve one paraphraſis;
And think thoſe rules of faith which came
From Chriſt, and Councils are the ſame.
So acted the Tridentine Sages;
They ſublimated all the pages
Of ſacred truth; till ſcarce the ſcum
Is left, or *caput mortuum*.
Then let me ſtill be ignorant,
And ſuch corrupted doctrines want;
Or let me be a good Philiſtine,
Rather than perſecuting Chriſtian.

The ARGUMENT *of the* SIXTH CANTO.

The ſlender bound'ries of a channel,
Entitles this, to uſe that man ill;
For Sinners only here abide,
But Saints alone on t'other ſide.

CANTO VI.

YES, ſure, the Deity, its clear,
Made ev'ry heavenly truth appear
Intelligible unto all,
Like the hand writing on the wall.
Though plain the rule, yet each can find,
Some ſolemn plea to warp the mind;
Their myſteries are wrapt in ſhade,
Which faithful eyes alone pervade;
And ſacred doctrines they enſhroud,
As Homer did his gods in cloud.
Each paints the god as ſecond Sphinx,
And then preſumtuouſly thinks
Herſelf the only Œdipus,
Who can his myſteries diſcuſs:

And this by help of Holy Spirit,
Which they alone think they inherit;
And by this principle can ſtrike
At Doctors, Dotards, Popes alike;
Which ſerves to reconcile all fictions,
Abſurdities, and contradictions;
And can perſuade 'gainſt taſte and ſight,
That bitter's ſweet, and black is white.

Croſs but a ſtream a furlong through,
You change a falſe Church for a true;
And, what is moſt ſurprizing ſtill,
Go North or South, which way you will,
That place enjoys the Goſpel light,
And t'other is the realms of night.
As if ſome Saint, like good St. Patrick,
(Who found for Iriſh vipers a trick,
Whether from Heaven receiv'd, or Hell,
Let thoſe who know the ſecret tell;
But not a viper, toad, or ſnake,
Can live ſince then in bog or lake;)
In Goſpel land, by his bequeſt,
Allow'd no Heretick to reſt.

The Chriſtian Church, in days of old,
Poſſeſs'd one heart and ſoul, we're told;
Their mutual faith and charity,
Ne'er ſuffer'd them to diſagree;

But

But now each little ſpot of earth,
Gives an all-righteous Church a birth.
And as in Chriſtendom dominions,
There are as many wild opinions;
And whilſt each holy ſect and brother,
Becomes anathema to t'other;
There's ſcarce a ſingle party found,
In principle and practice ſound.
Had Chriſt not left his Church a Creed
So plain, that they who run might read;
Or had he to the world reveal'd
A law, not with perfection ſeal'd;
Or wanted plainer terms t' impart
Its force and meaning to the heart;
Then ev'ry party might produce
Obſcurity as their excuſe.
But where's that ſect that can endure
T' admit Chriſt's precepts as obſcure?
Since doing this they muſt confeſs
Their principles are built on gueſs.
No; ev'ry Church in theſe can find
The meaning of the heavenly mind,
And each moſt confidently ſays,
She has the *Tupon Didakes*,
The form of doctrine taught by Sages,
In pure and apoſtolick ages,

And

And impudently will aver,
Though others may, ſhe cannot err;
Nay, ſhe'll defy a ſingle man,
E'en from Beerſheba unto Dan,
By which ſhe means the univerſe,
To get to Heaven in ſpite of her's,
Making a circle 'bout th' Elect,
Which Hell itſelf cannot diſſect,
Though would the Devil reſt ſatisfy'd
They'd give him all the world beſide.
--- Kind, generous ſouls! --- But let the Devil
Take his own way, 'twould be more civil;
Let him be free to lay his traps,
To circumvent ſuch thoughtleſs chaps,
As ſwear, blaſpheme, carouſe, get drunk,
And lye with ev'ry dirty punk;
Such as to ev'ry vice are prone;
This would be giving him his own.
But then to force upon him, ſuch as,
Do all they can t'avoid his clutches;
And that becauſe they can't agree,
About the bending of the knee;
Or elſe becauſe they dare deny
The feign'd infallibility;
With all thoſe infamous traditions,
Injunctions, doctrines, and poſitions;

Which are not found in holy writ,
Is neither modeſt nor diſcreet;
And yet, by imprecations cruel,
Such are conſign'd t' infernal fuel.
So Æſop's wolf, devoid of ſhame,
Declares the lamb has foul'd the ſtream;
Though from his mouth the waters flow,
To the poor lamb who ſtands below;
But he, on maſſacre intent,
Lays his own crimes on th' innocent.
If ſuch be the true Chriſtian ſcheme,
T' abandon modeſty and ſhame,
May I abhor ſuch myſteries,
And never at that rate be wiſe.

The ARGUMENT *of the* SEVENTH CANTO.

Ancient and Modern Rome compar'd;
Her High-Prieſt each, and ſacred Herd;
The Pomps and Ceremonies too,
Are prov'd the ſame in Old and New.

CANTO VII.

NOW let us go a little further,
And ſhow how Rome delights in murther.
Let's probe her ulcers to the bottom,
Diſplay her faults, and how ſhe got 'em;
Each pagan pomp and ceremony,
Which ſhe embrac'd, and popt upon ye;
As doctrines pure, and truly chriſtian,
Although they'd ſhame a grave Philiſtine.
But yet ſo numerous and heavy
Are errors of thoſe ſons of Levi,
That he who'd paint this maſs of ſin,
Is at a loſs where to begin.
Yet to get over this demurrer,
And ſtruggle through this maze of error,
We'll firſt take notice of the Pope,
Who, when he's paſs'd the ſacred grope,

Sets

Sets up for univerſal Biſhop,
Which is the chief ſupport of his ſhop,
Fraught with infallibility,
He gives the ſacred Writ the lye;
Proclaiming that to be moſt holy.
Which Chriſt pronounces ſin and folly.
Hence comes th' infernal inundation,
Of relique, and image veneration;
Penance, indulgences, confeſſions,
Saints, agnus-dei's, and proceſſions;
Hermits and monks of different claſſes,
And nunneries replete with laſſes;
By which 'tis plain they did aſſume
Th' theology of Pagan Rome.
Now not to dwell upon the name
Of Pope, which is the very ſame
The Scythians gave their idol Jove,
As plain Herodotus doth prove;
Whoe'er is vers'd in hiſtory
Profane, will evidently ſee,
That ancient Rome, as well as new,
Could boaſt her Sov'reign Pontiff too;
Who did enjoy th' identic power,
The Pope aſſumes unto this hour.
Sole arbiter of ſacred things,
And uncontroulable by Kings;

Chief idol of the rout, and Prophet,
As Moloch heretofore at Tophet.
All ſacrifices he decreed,
Upon what altar they ſhould bleed;
Unto what God, and on what day,
And in what temple men ſhould pray.
He had his Flamen, Salii, Veſtal,
And Augurs too, who ſlily gueſt all
Thoſe dark events, which they pretended,
Beaſts' entrails told them Heaven intended.
All theſe religious he inſpected,
And ſaw that nothing was neglected:
By minor Pontiffs was ſurrounded,
Of whom a college had been founded;
Which college, when he put his noſe in,
(Though by that ſuffrage he was choſen,)
Thoſe petty lights as dimly ſhone,
As ſtars when darken'd by the ſun.
Bringing this Pagan and his tribe in,
Is juſt the Court of Rome deſcribing;
Becauſe the Pope aſſumes as great
A power as any Potentate;
Lord Paramount of ſacred things,
Honour'd by Emperors and Kings;
And from his vulgar congregation,
Gets more than idol veneration.

A guardian Saint for every State
He can appoint,—nay, e'en create
Intercalations and indictions,
Feaſts moveable, as well as fix'd ones;
Epacts, faſt-days, and days to wed on,
When fiſh or fleſh-meat muſt be fed on:
All theſe, with other tricks and fictions,
Spring from the Pope's ſole juriſdictions.
Behold his Nuns, too, and his Friars,
With Jeſuits, that group of liars;
Prieſts, Biſhops, Cardinals, and Monks,
And heads of pious knaves and punks,
(Abbots and Abbeſſes I mean,)
Thoſe neſts of clean birds, and unclean;
With all the rout that bend the knee
To this terreſtrial deity;
Who claims a right to rule the roaſt,
Aſſiſted by the Holy Ghoſt;
Which he receiv'd without his knowledge,
When choſen by the ſacred College;
Who at that inſtant did confer
A pow'r celeſtial not to err;
Together with that prieſtly claim,
Of abſolution in God's name;
Though how to make th' aſſertion good,
He can't find out for his heart's blood:

Yet

Yet to deny't is worſe behaviour
In man, than to renounce his Saviour;
Than if his father he had ſlain,
Or rak'd the ſtews of Drury-lane;
Defil'd the help-mate of another,
Made bold with ſiſter, aunt, or mother.
For crimes of deepeſt dye, like theſe,
The Pope will pardon for his fees;
But an offence againſt the Head
O' th' Church, is of too deep a red;
And can't with honour be forgiv'n
By Pope on earth, or Chriſt in Heav'n.
Therefore to doubt what he declares,
Muſt render fruitleſs gold and prayers;
Becauſe ſuch diffidence he knows,
His power extenſive overthrows;
And with that power, falls Purgatory,
The chief ſupport of all his glory.
For was it not for this ſame limbo,
Some men would put their arms a-kimbo,
Laugh at their ſly apotheoſis,
And go to Heav'n ſpite of their noſes;
Without beſtowing pence and farthings,
T' obtain indulgences and pardons.
Now let us view thoſe ſacred rites,
In which the Romiſh church delights;

Obſerve how cloſe they all agree
With Heatheniſh idolatry.
  Thoſe Pagan rites did always paſs
Under the modern name of Maſs;
And holy water cloſely verges
Upon their Heatheniſh aſperges;
The Popiſh Prieſts retain the veſtures,
The bowings, and the antick geſtures,
That Pagan Prieſts obſerv'd and wore,
In their luſtrations heretofore;
Have their oblations, off'rings, annates,
And fees for ev'ry thing a man eats;
Have incenſe, ſacrifice, and muſic,
All which would make a Turk or Jew ſick;
Yet all from Pagan Rome deriv'd,
And by the Romiſh church reviv'd;
Becauſe invented with deſign
To make th' ambitious Clergy ſhine.
  If thus to ethnick pomp and pride,
The church of Rome's ſo near ally'd;
And if for purity that church
Does leave all others in the lurch;
With innocence let me adore, an
Elephant, or the Alcoran.

The ARGUMENT *of the* EIGHTH CANTO.

The eaſy Method of deceiving
A People forward in believing;
Some pious Frauds are laid before ye;
Alſo a Canterbury *Story.*

CANTO VIII.

BUT ſhall the Mother Church moſt holy,
Say this is wiſdom, that is folly;
This is a doctrine old or new,
Or this a falſe one, that a true?
And ſhall an impious world deny it,
And aſk, forſooth, how ſhe came by it?
It is enough, the Church commands it,
And he'll be damn'd, who e'er withſtands it.
Juſt ſo endeavours the ſly Gypſey,
To blind his dupe, or make him tipſey;
Which crowns with wonder all his tricks,
And thus with eaſe your purſe he picks;
Which is but ſmiling in your face,
And robbing with a better grace.
But ſuperſtition 's of that nature,
That it diſfigures ev'ry feature

Of

Of that religion it would fain
In credit and repute maintain.
For whilſt it ſtrives, with ſpecious ſtory,
T' enhance its beauty and its glory,
Thinking it ne'er can do enough,
Loads it with infamy and ſcoff;
Making the dreams of frantic Wights
Of equal force with what God writes.
From hence a thouſand errors ſpring up,
Which fiery zeal and nonſenſe bring up;
And that I'm right in what I ſay,
The following ſtory will diſplay.
It is recorded of Tereſa,
Saint, I ſhould ſay, (or elſe diſgrace a
Zealous and moſt religious daughter,
As e'er was touch'd with holy water,)
One night, or day, 'tis all the ſame,
Chriſt met this Lady in a dream:
Firſt he appear'd as God her Saviour,
And laid down rules for her behaviour;
Soon after this, he did addreſs her,
In ſhape and form of her Confeſſor;
Bid her Chriſt's precepts to deſpiſe,
Aſſuring her the whole were lies.
Now here's a caſe extremely nice,
But Saints reſolve things in a trice.

'Tis very true—the dream is odd,
Nor is ſhe ſure 'twas th' Son of God;
But it the Devil might be, perhaps,
Who dogg'd her ſtill with after-claps;
And though by this Chriſt prov'd a liar,
She'd ſtill believe her ſpir'tual Squire:
The reaſon's plain—becauſe ſhe knew,
That when he ſpoke—then God ſpoke too.
You'll ſay 't's a fib—perhaps it might,
Yet Father Craſſet thus did write.
When ſuperſtition thus prevails,
Reaſon, you ſee, in power fails;
The ſenſes yield, without controul,
To fear, triumphant in the ſoul.
Like Pliny's mares, the mind conceives
Merely by wind, and then believes
The dictates of imagination,
Under the cloak of revelation.
And when diſturb'd, the fancy raiſes
Viſions, and worſhips its diſeaſes;
It does the fears of Ignorance,
For Prudence and Foreſight advance;
Whilſt Reaſon, purblind, ſhuns the force
Of ſober rational diſcourſe.
As perſons, who are weak in ſight,
Do all they can to ſhun the light.

Within

Within this ſtate of dereliction,
No art can bring about conviction;
For man, infected thus, will parry
The reaſons of his adverſary;
By ſome ſtrange miracle, or ſight,
Which told him all he did was right.
Though did he uſe Reflection's glaſs,
He'd ſee himſelf therein an aſs;
That whilſt the Goſpel he'd deny,
He reverenc'd a baſeleſs lye.

Stories, indeed, and viſions might
Deceive the tedium of a night,
Might make the maid or footman ſtare,
And check them ſometimes when they ſwear;
They'd ſcare a ſchool-boy more than birch;
But when they creep into the Church,
When they forſake the chimney-ſide,
And by the Church are ſanctify'd;
'Mongſt our *credenda* too are plac'd;
Then Chriſt's religion is diſgrac'd.
And yet a thouſand ſuch prevail,
Within the Roman church's pale;
As if, devoid of truth, their Court
Had need of lies for its ſupport.

Cunning may help religion out,
As cordials do aſſiſt the gout;

But yet of theſe too frequent uſe,
At laſt the vital ſtrength reduce.
That Church, whoſe chief foundation lies
In pious frauds and forgeries;
On which they ſtubble build, and hay,
Will languiſh daily and decay.
How great ſoever the deluſion,
Yet charity draws this concluſion,
That man is firſt himſelf deceiv'd,
In that which he would have believ'd;
Eſpecially 'mongſt Sectaries,
Who miracles diſclaim and lies.
But in all ſects, except the true,
Their zeal is greateſt who purſue
Such methods, whether wrong or right,
As promiſe beſt to proſelyte.
Numbers they think the truth proclaims,
So each t' increaſe her number aims;
For though by fraud her view ſh' obtains,
Succeſs will ſanctify the means.
From this perſuaſion we ſuppoſe
Some miracles and viſions roſe;
But far the greater part, it's plain,
Sprung from the filthy view of gain;
Becauſe that miracle, or viſion,
Or Saint, that cannot make proviſion,

For thoſe who paſs it as divine,
Will loſe its credit and its ſhrine;
For in all actions, fair or foul,
Gold is the magnet of the ſoul.
Now to maintain this bold aſſertion,
And ſhew nor favour, nor averſion;
Amongſt thoſe frauds, and godly lyes,
And ſecond-hand Divinities;
A few plain caſes may be ample,
To give the curious world a ſample;
Becauſe we can't the whole purſue,
Nor tythe the tenth, if that would do;
For they're like flies in carcaſe dead,
And grow like vermin on the head.
The ſtories may afford delight,
If th' doggrel Muſe can paint them right.
A certain Prieſt obtains ſome crabs,
And on their backs ſome wet clay dabs;
In which he fix'd ſome candles lighted,
And this he in a gloomy night did;
Then ſets them in a church-yard crawling,
Which was well fenc'd with a brick wall in.
In that drear place, ſo ſtrange a ſight
Did all the neighbourhood affright;
Nor was the Prieſt himſelf the laſt
Who ſtood at this ſtrange ſight aghaſt;

But praying till he well was weary,
Both night and day to Virgin Mary,
He fell aſleep, and in a dream
This Virgin Mary to him came;
Told him that thoſe were ſouls diſtreſs'd,
By purgatorial flames oppreſs'd;
And wanted maſſes, alms, and dirges,
To bring them through that priſon's verges.
This prov'd a notable device,
And brought in money in a trice;
For 'tis a rule in church and cloiſter,
No penny, then no Paſter-noſter.
  But let us ceaſe abroad to roam,
For miracles we have at home,
Perform'd by Becket, whom, we hear,
Devoutly fill'd Canturia's chair;
For if you call rebellion grace,
And pride and obſtinacy place
As virtues which a Saint adorn,
He was a Saint as ſure as born;
Though was it not for the Pope's charter,
Some think he had not been a Martyr.
  Such miracles! ſo great, ſo many,
Were never yet outdone by any;
Not only Saint, but, what is odd,
In theſe he excell'd the Son of God;

As that fam'd Sage, Peter de Blois,
To all the world doth plainly ſhew.
For as our Saviour once declar'd,
That thoſe who firm to him adher'd,
The works he did they ſhould do too,
Nay, greater works than thoſe ſhould do;
So this prediction, ſome declare,
Was by this Saint made out t' a hair;
Whoſe blood collected from his head,
Diſtempers cur'd, and rais'd the dead.
But yet this virtue ſtill it wanted,
Although it all things elſe enchanted,
It yielded to the widow's cruiſe,
And leſſen'd daily by its uſe;
So what the Saint did not impart,
Muſt be ſupply'd by human art;
Or elſe too ſoon, by this decreaſe,
The gainful miracles would ceaſe.
By water, then, with one drop dy'd,
The ſinking fund muſt he ſupply'd;
Which giv'n the dead, or ſick, they tell,
Perform'd the miracle as well.
If to the ſick it was apply'd,
(With proper medicines beſide,)
It never fail'd to work a cure,
As if the blood had all been pure;

Or if it was adminiſtred,
In proper manner to the dead,
(Into the mouth we muſt ſuppoſe)
Whene'er he taſted it he roſe;
In wind and limb became as ſound
As if the blood reek'd from the wound.
This Becket brought great veneration,
Not only through the Britiſh nation,
But he had vows and offerings,
From foreign Potentates and Kings;
And foreign pilgrims, it is clear,
Were fifty thouſand in one year.
But when the Reformation came,
The Saint loſt all his power and fame;
He cur'd no ſick, nor ſinners pardon'd,
Becauſe the peoples hearts were harden'd;
'Cauſe Doubt, that's always Argus ey'd,
Began with Reaſon to preſide;
The firſt did miracles diſtruſt,
The laſt beheld them with diſguſt;
That they were forg'ries both inſiſt,
And gainful traffick of the Prieſt;
Who, to ſupport his pow'r and gain,
Will forge, will lye, will be profane.
Now, Prophet-like, the Saint muſt roam,
For honours he has loſt at home;

And ſo compell'd to turn Phyſician,
In the dark realms of ſuperſtition;
For there the blood works wonders ſtill,
And brings griſt daily to the mill;
And will continue to deceive,
Whilſt fools are forward to believe.
Since thus impoſing on the ſenſes,
And cheating people of their pence, is
A principle devis'd in Hell,
In ign'rance then I wiſh to dwell;
If ſuch are Chriſtians, I would be,
Had I my choice, a Cherokee.

The ARGUMENT *of the* NINTH CANTO.

The fertile Schemes of Monkiſh Art,
T' enſlave a ſuperſtitious Heart;
With th' helliſh Tricks a Jeſuit play'd,
T' enjoy a penitential Maid.

CANTO IX.

NO longer ſhall the faithful Muſe,
Diſplay their mercenary views;
But now an odious ſcene of luſt,
Shall be impartially diſcuſt.
And if a crime, however baſe,
Of all mankind the foul diſgrace,
Can more abundantly create
Your indignation and your hate;
You muſt inevitably ſtare hard,
At this of Father Baptiſt Girrard,
Who did unite in ſolemn league
With Hell to manage an intrigue.
Though long the ſtory, yet I truſt,
'Twill entertain, and not diſguſt.
The taſk is hard, but I ſhall try
To leave out all obſcenity;

And

And if ſome blaſphemy is writ,
Blame this infernal Jeſuit.
In Toulon once there liv'd a Fair,
Nam'd Mary Catharine Cadiere,
Unto whoſe lovely form and face
Heav'n added plenitude of grace.
This lovely maid was all devotion,
According to the Popiſh notion.
D'Oulonne her Confeſſor had been,
And ghoſtly guide, untill eighteen,
When Girrard got the chief direction,
And found her ſoul without infection.
He told her, God had ſome deſign
Upon her, and ſhe muſt reſign
Herſelf in all humility;
Then ſaid—Reſign yourſelf to me.
And ſtooping down, upon her breath'd,
Which ſuch an extaſy bequeath'd,
As fill'd with love her virgin mind,
And ſhe reply'd—Sir, I'm reſign'd.
At this the Prieſt was overjoy'd,
He found her virtue half deſtroy'd;
And by the help of magic art,
He ſoon was maſter of her heart.
He bid her take the Sacrament
Each day, in churches different:

Told

Told her ſhe ſhould have viſions too,
Which, to her coſt, ſhe ſoon found true:
Theſe, when they came, ſhe did diſcover
T' her ghoſtly father and her lover;
To whom ſhe ev'ry day reſorted,
To be inform'd what they imported;
Whilſt he thoſe viſits ſtill improv'd,
To make himſelf the more belov'd;
And did diſplay, with ſkilful art,
The vile intentions of his heart;
But ſtill wrapp'd up in ſuch expreſſion,
As might conſiſt with his profeſſion.
But now incapable of pray'r,
This lovely penitent took care,
To lay her godly griefs before him,
And told him how ſhe did adore him.

Pray'r, ſays the Prieſt, is the means rather
Of going to our heav'nly Father;
And when that bliſs we once obtain,
To pray muſt fruitleſs be and vain.
Your love for me I much applaud,
In this y' obey the will of God;
Who in a dream to me laſt night,
Reveal'd we two ſhould ſoon unite.
And ſince I will declare the whole,
You ſoon ſhall be ſoul of my ſoul.

Then

Then breath'd again upon her, which
Did more and more her ſoul bewitch.
The Prieſt, inflam'd with a warm paſſion,
And bleſs'd but in imagination,
Reſolv'd, when next he did confeſs her,
T' embrace that moment and careſs her:
But yet the better to prepare her,
'Twas neceſſary firſt to ſcare her.
Therefore a voice at night proclaims,
She muſt endure eternal flames;
And nothing could remove the evil,
But being poſſeſs'd one year by th' Devil.
Soon, then, to Girrard her Confeſſor,
She tells the voice that did diſtreſs her:
At which he is not much ſurpriz'd,
But, like a friend of Hell, adviſ'd,
That ſince th' Almighty had diſclos'd
His will, by having thus propos'd,
This offer ought to be embrac'd,
'Cauſe of two evils 'twas the leaſt.
The force of this laſt argument
Told her 'twas prudent to conſent;
So, taught by th' Prieſt, this harmleſs maid
This ſhort confeſſionary ſaid:
"O Lord, th' amount of my deſire,
"Is to perform what you require."

Theſe words ſhe ſcarcely did pronounce,
When all her ſenſes fled at once;
She ſwore, ſhe rag'd, blaſphem'd againſt
The Virgin Mary and the Saints;
Had fits convulſive, and extatic,
Not to be mov'd by pow'r prelatic;
And thoſe ſo frequent were, and ſtrong,
No fleſh and blood could hold out long.
At length t' her chamber ſhe's confin'd,
'Twas what the ghoſtly guide deſign'd;
Becauſe the world would then connive at
The viſits which he paid in private.
Thoſe he immediately commenc'd,
With which her eaſy friends diſpens'd;
Not dreaming 'twas his helliſh trick
Made this fair penitent ſo ſick.
Thus Girrard ſteer'd with proſp'rous gale,
And next day all his hopes prevail;
For as he never did neglect her,
He went to give a ghoſtly lecture;
When ſitting on the bed he found her,
With her relations ſtanding round her;
Theſe he commanded to retire,
And all obey the ſpir'tual Squire.
Then inſtantly he locks the door,
Becauſe his buſineſs was ſo pure,

It was not fit a carnal eye
Should what he was about deſcry.
Scarce had the two been left alone,
When the poor girl began to moan;
Becauſe a fit of extacy,
By ſymptoms, ſhe perceiv'd was nigh,
— She's now poſſeſs'd, her ſenſes fled,
And proſtrate lies upon the bed;
When naked charms concur t' invite
A much leſs vicious appetite;
And as on thoſe he fix'd his heart,
He faithfully perform'd his part.
But this enjoyment did not cloy,
He lov'd her more, and muſt enjoy;
And therefore when his paſſion burn'd,
The Lady's extacy return'd;
(For he by magic ſkill could plague you,
Juſt like a periodic ague;)
And then the Doctor would be doing;
At length the girl perceiv'd her ruin.
Not that as yet a ſtop enſu'd,
To what does pregnancy exclude;
But often, when the fits were over,
Some certain tokens did diſcover;
Without the leaſt room for ſuſpence,
She loſt her honour with her ſenſe.

And when ſhe could not eaſy brook,
The beſtial liberties he took,
She did immediately diſcloſe,
The doubts that in her boſom roſe.
But he could not permit this ſcruple
To rule the breaſt of his fair pupil;
Whoſe charms luxuriant did diſpenſe
A bounteous feaſt to ev'ry ſenſe.
He therefore told her, that behaviour
Was pleaſing to their gracious Saviour;
Whoſe Saints might taſte the joys of love,
And antedate their bliſs above.
But what this guardian of the ſoul
As yet poſſeſs'd, was always ſtole;
And that becauſe his paramour
Was ſenſeleſs ſtill when he went to her;
And ſince of love the true completion,
Conſiſts in mutual inclination;
Th' enjoyment loſt its chief attractive,
When in the feat but one was active;
And therefore, not the cauſe to ſtarve,
At once he throws off all reſerve.
He ſtands the gallant now confeſt,
And thruſts his hand into her breaſt;
This ſhe reſented with a gloom,
The Prieſt enrag'd deſerts the room;

And ſends a proſtituted woman,
(Who alſo to him had been common,)
To rate her ſoundly for deſtroying,
The pleaſing thoughts he had of toying;
Who hop'd ſhe'd follow good advice,
And not hereafter be ſo nice;
But, by ſubmitting, ſhew compunction,
For her contempt o' the ſacred function.
The poor deluded girl repented
That ſhe this freedom had reſented;
Becauſe, in fact, it was no more
Than he had often done before;
Although ſhe was not privy to it,
But to reſent would not undo it.
And now with arguments amus'd,
No more ſhe thinks herſelf abus'd;
And when ſhe to confeſſion went,
" Father, ſhe cries, I do repent;
And am determin'd, from this moment,
T' obey thy will, let what will come on't."
At this the Ghoſtly Father ſigh'd,
Then to his penitent reply'd:
" That you have heinouſly tranſgreſs'd,
You now have piouſly confeſs'd;
I therefore with the crime diſpenſe;
But then the nature of th' offence,

Requires that you ſhould undergo
Penance, to place you *ſtatu quo.*
That is, you cannot well be rais'd
To what you were, till God's appeas'd.
To-morrow, therefore, I ſhall come
T' your chamber, and pronounce your doom."
Now ſcarce had Sol ſurvey'd the town,
When th' Jeſuit put on his gown;
And hung about his neck the beads,
Then to his Penitent proceeds:
Whilſt all who ſee him trudge ſo early,
Conclude that he muſt love ſouls dearly.
At his approach the doors fly ope,
He made a croſs, then ſaid—"I hope
My Saint is up, and at her pray'rs;"
Yes, Sir, ſays Betty, walk up ſtairs.
The Prieſt obey'd, you may be ſure,
Enters the chamber,—locks the door;
Here he beheld his fair Magdalen
Upon her knees, and her beads telling.
She now was ſaying her Pater Noſter,
When Ghoſtly Father did accoſt her.
"Thou type of Heav'n, and heav'nly bliſs,
Come hither—give me firſt a kiſs.
So,—this, my child, ſerves to diſcover
I'm not your enemy, but lover;

Yet

Yet ſtill the meſſenger of God,
Ordain'd to exerciſe this rod;
For Heav'n indulgent, by ſuch ſcourges,
As theſe you ſee, tranſgreſſion purges."
Th' affrighted fair began t' implore him,
But yet he made her kneel before him;
And thus pronounc'd, (with ſcourge in hand,)
" Dear child, God's juſtice does demand,
That ſince you impiouſly have loath'd,
To be with gifts cæleſtial cloath'd,
You ſhould immediately be ſtript
Naked, and moſt ſeverely whipt.
You well deſerve the world ſhould know,
And ſee the ſhame you undergo;
Though God permits that none ſhould ſpy;
Nor witneſs be, but you and I.
Yet firſt of all I do propoſe,
That you do ſwear you'll not diſcloſe
This action to a living creature."
I ſwear (ſays Mary) by St. Peter.
He plac'd her now prone on the bed,
Her petticoats turn'd o'er her head;
And a few eaſy ſtripes laid on,
Then kiſs'd the place when he had done.
Now from the bed he gently rais'd her,
And for her reſignation prais'd her;

But then he grows a little bolder,
And with a feign'd reluctance told her,
That God, as yet, was not appeas'd,
But hopes ſhe would not be amaz'd;
For ſhe muſt be ſtript to her ſkin,
To expiate her crying ſin.
So much th' injunction did affright,
She ſcream'd, and loſt her ſenſes quite.
Nor had recover'd from her ſhock,
When he undreſs'd her to her ſmock.
He kiſs'd and hugg'd,—her promiſe claim'd,
'Till warm deſire the girl inflam'd;
And then from bliſs to bliſs they go,
'Till ſhe had nothing to beſtow.

His viſits now were always duple,
Stript of reſerve as well as ſcruple;
And luſt became in both ſo regnant,
That the deluded girl grew pregnant;
Which was confirm'd by two ſuppreſſions,
And this ſhe told in her confeſſions.

Affrighted when the thing was nam'd,
The Prieſt declar'd her blood inflam'd;
And to preſerve her health, he thought
That ſhe ſhould take ſome cooling draught.
Some cooling powders then he brought her,
And thoſe ſhe daily took in water;

Though the poor creature had no notion
What were the virtues of the potion;
Till by experience ſad ſhe knew,
That an abortion did enſue.
Hence ſhe perceiv'd her ghoſtly Father,
To ſend her out of th' world had rather,
And paſs her for a Saint and Maid,
Than his own crimes ſhould be betray'd.
Now if this ſtory don't aſtoniſh,
I think it ought at leaſt t'admoniſh
The bigots of that baſe profeſſion
Againſt auricular confeſſion;
Which, as it makes a Prieſt acquainted
With ev'ry thing a whore or ſaint did,
And gives him alſo an aſcendant
O'er ev'ry devotee attendant;
So ſcarce a wife or maid can 'ſcape
Their ſuffering a godly rape.
But what affords the moſt ſurprize,
Is, that th' Italian, grave and wiſe,
Should plant his quiet, like a ſot,
And honour, in ſo frail a ſpot:
Should be ſo jealous of his ſpouſe,
And like a convent guard his houſe,
Yet ſtill can ſee a wife, or punk,
Retire in ſecret with a Monk,

And not ſuppoſe that they may drive at
The thing he dreads moſt, when in private;
This being the leaſt of Monkiſh crimes,
And done by them ten thouſand times.
Girrard no ſooner did diſcover,
The ſtorm impending had blown over;
That the cool powders took effect,
And the dread pregnancy had check'd;
That his fair penitent was better,
Than thus he wrote this godly letter:
" You ſee, dear child, that this is thrice
I've wrote, in three days, my advice.
Indeed, I thank God for't, I find
Myſelf but very ill inclin'd
Another object to delight in,
Beſides the fair to whom I'm writing:
At leaſt I'm ſure the caſe is ſo,
She's always with me where I go;
And when I deal with other wenches,
The thoughts of her my paſſion quenches:
Ten thouſand thanks I give our Saviour,
For the continuance of his favour;
For the freſh hopes you have, at leaſt,
Of bleſſings, which had lately ceas'd.
And in return, my little Pet!
Be paſſive, and yourſelf forget;

Theſe two expreſſions do imply,
A ſtate of mind that's heavenly.
" I wrote before that you may eat,
When ſo inclin'd, a little meat.
Of reſolution I have need,
You ſhall not as a victim bleed.
So let your perturbations ſleep,
No ſcruple in your boſom keep;
But me obey in all things, rather
As duteous children do their father.
" I long, my dear, with anxious pain
To ſee you --- and ſee all again.
O! 'tis an age, I think, ſince you,
Indulg'd me with an ample view,
Of ev'ry thing: --- You muſt allow
I have a righteous claim to 't now.
But I ſhall tire you, I ſuppoſe;
Well --- won't you tire me too, at th' cloſe?
It is but juſt we both ſhould bear
In ev'ry thing an equal ſhare.
I hope in time you will be wiſe,
Nor favours, nor advice deſpiſe.
Guiol, I'm told, ſurpriz'd you crying
Ev'n yeſterday, and almoſt dying;
But to my joy unſpeakable,
To day your brother found you well.

Pray don't you put th' inconſtant ſlut on;
But yet 'twere worſe ſhould you turn glutton.
Patience! I cannot reſt in quiet;
Pray don't neglect your cooling diet:
On days of abſtinence beleaguer
Your body ſtill, by eating meagre;
But if this hurts you, you perceive,
--- Then eat ſome fleſh --- you have my leave.
'Twill help you out in this diſaſter,
And is the pleaſure of our Maſter.
" And now, my deareſt child --- good night,
May you this ſcrawl decypher right."
Oh, thou infernal knave and brute,
Who to thy luſt couldſt proſtitute
Thy God, thy conſcience, and commiſſion,
And innocence lead to perdition.
Did Chriſt to thee this pattern ſhew?
Or didſt thou only learn him ſo?
Wert thou to bring thy conſcience able
To think Chriſtianity a fable?
Or didſt thou as a premium hope,
For abſolution from the Pope?
Becauſe that thou in Popiſh ſervice,
Hadſt been engag'd, *cum totis nervis*;
And 'tis his maxim to diſpenſe
His pardons for the worſt offence

To thoſe who always did endeavour,
By gold, or zeal, to purchaſe favour.
  Whate'er thy thought, howe'er inclin'd,
Thy acts are all from Hell deſign'd:
And th' Tree of Knowledge plainly ſhews,
That in thy cell luxuriant grows,
Such baneful fruit from thence does come,
As curſes ſtill all Chriſtendom.
  But thus before I'd learned be,
And practiſe ſuch Chriſtianity,
I had much rather take my chance
For Happineſs in Ignorance.

The ARGUMENT *of the* TENTH CANTO.

Shews what a ſtriking likeneſs there is,
'Twixt Rome and th' Government of Fairies;
The tricks of thoſe nocturnal 'Squires,
Exactly copy'd by the Friars.

CANTO X.

HOBBS has this whimſical opinion,
Rome in her politic dominion
Did from the Fairies take their ſcheme,
Or elſe the Fairies plan'd from them;
So like are they in ev'ry ſhape,
One is the other's type, or ape.
Whence ſpring, ſays he, thoſe ghoſts and ſprites,
That haunt the timorous by nights;
And play their pranks in barns and ſtables,
Do they not ſpring from old wives fables?
So the hierarchy of the Beaſt,
Is but the ghoſt of Rome deceas'd;
For all her pious pains and tricks
Ariſe from heathen politics.

In

In Fairy land, too, there's but one
Monarch ſupreme, call'd Oberon;
In Rome juſt ſo, men place their hope,
And fears, in one great Monarch — Pope.
Fairies are little ſpir'tual 'Squires;
So Monks are ſpir'tual too, and Friars.
Fairies and Goblins too poſſeſs
Dark ſhades and groves for their receſs;
So Prieſts church ſolitudes endure,
And walk in myſteries obſcure.
Fairies have their enchanted domes,
Poſſeſs'd by ſome gigantic Gnomes;
Who o'er their brethren domineer,
Keep all the regions round them clear.
So Levites, of gigantic ſize,
Swoln big by their pluralities,
Their ſmall parochial brethren blink on,
Juſt as the Devil look'd over Lincoln.
Fairies you can't arreſt or ſue
For any knaviſh tricks they do;
'Cauſe when they ſteal your ſhoes and garters,
They fly to their enchanted quarters.
So if you call thoſe Sons of Grace
Before a Juſtice of the Peace,
For treſpaſs in venereal ſports,
They'll vaniſh to their ghoſtly courts.

Fairies not only pilfer ladles,
But they ſteal children out of cradles;
And take fine babies to themſelves,
Leaving inſtead their fools and elves.
Juſt ſo the Jeſuits fill their College,
With youth diſpos'd for ſenſe and knowledge;
Leaving the blockheads to their mothers,
Or elſe to fill the ſchools of others.
And e'en theſe blockheads, too, forſooth,
From Reaſon's cradle ſteal our youth;
Cramp them with ſubtle myſteries,
Blind them with miracles and lies;
And this the reaſon is, you find,
Crowds of blind leaders of the blind.
'Tis generally known, that Fairies
Slip through the key-hole into dairies;
And there they feaſt upon the cream,
Whilſt dairy-maid does ſleep and dream.
Juſt ſo from bigotry of old,
The Popiſh Prieſts at preſent hold
The richeſt lands in their poſſeſſion,
Skimm'd from the beſt eſtates o' the nation.
But now to drive the nail o' the head,
'Tis certain Fairies never wed:
Neither do Prieſts.—But theſe, we're told,
Without the help of ſhower of gold,

Which

Which Jove made uſe of to entrap,
When he fell into Danaë's lap;
Can over virgin hearts prevail.
And here the parallel does fail;
Becauſe it ne'er was ſung or ſaid
A Fairy got a maidenhead.

The ARGUMENT *of the* ELEVENTH CANTO.

Error, its Shapes and Impoſitions,
On Stateſmen, Gownſmen, and Phyſicians;
'Tis the Fanatic's inward Light;
Sinners and Saints deluded by 't.

CANTO XI.

'TIS by the Connoiſſeurs of Nature,
Affirm'd there is a little creature,
Cameleon call'd, which, in its ranges,
A thouſand times its colour changes.
That if it perches upon black,
It carries ſable on its back;
Or, if it lights upon a green,
It is, whilſt there, in verdure ſeen.
And thus of ev'ry other colour,
As Plutarch will inform you fuller.
So Error, like this fickle lizard,
Does ſtill appear in borrow'd vizard;
And, Proteus like, it ſlyly apes,
A thouſand different forms and ſhapes;
And has this quality beſide,
'Tis Truth itſelf, or near ally'd.

Whether

Whether it be in Church or State,
So well it can aſſimilate
Itſelf to party diſpoſition,
That its embrac'd without ſuſpicion.
It joins the Stateſman's politics,
Then acts a thouſand dirty tricks.
In the ſham Patriot's breaſt it rages,
And on his ſide the mob engages;
By it th' inſidious ſchemes of faction,
Exciting tumults and diſtraction,
Will wear of honeſt Zeal the face,
Though all the ſtruggle's for a place;
As thoſe who on the water go,
Do look one way, another row.
It ſometimes rides in martial car,
Sometimes attends the ductile bar;
And there it rages like a Fury,
Until detected by the Jury.
If to the Bench you caſt your eyes,
Ev'n there you'll ſee it ſwerve the wiſe;
Not from a principle of ill,
But through miſtake, or want of ſkill:
Or elſe how comes it that we ſee
One Chancellor change the decree
His predeceſſor gave; though both
Are bound to juſtice by one oath.

Grave Æſculapius' ſon does ride
In coach, with Error by his ſide;
Which governs the preſcribing quill,
And whom he meant to cure, doth kill.
But cloſer ſtill it ſticks to thoſe,
Who from the noiſy mortar roſe;
T' apply a lancet, or a bliſter,
Or, in the room of nurſe, a clyſter;
Though ſkill in phyſic they no more have,
Commence the genuine ſons of Boerhaave.
Nor ev'n the pulpit can eſcape,
For there you'll find it dreſs'd in crape;
Raiſing miſchievous doubts and ſcruples,
In conſciences of harmleſs pupils.
It ſtill attends ſynodal greetings,
And holy brethren in their meetings;
Who, by its impulſe, are infected,
And led to think themſelves elected.
Whilſt thoſe who brag of inward light,
Are moſt infatuated by 't.
Let not the Muſe then ſeem to rail,
If, breaking through the Popiſh pale,
She traces Error through its mazes,
And points out other ſects' diſeaſes.
For idly let no man preſume,
That Error is confin'd to Rome;

That

That the Reformers quite did ſteer,
From Prejudice and Error clear;
For ſuch perfection could not be
Annex'd to frail mortality.
And therefore as that Painter, who
A moſt enchanting beauty drew;
United in th' angelic face,
Each pleaſing excellence and grace
Which warm deſire, and melting thought,
To his luxuriant fancy brought;
And when the curious piece had been,
More beauteous made than Beauty's Queen;
At ev'ry fertile dauber's hint,
He alter'd every feature in't;
'Till no ſimilitude at all,
Was left of the original.
So when the firſt Reformers plac'd,
Thoſe truths which Popery had grac'd;
As being the genuine law of Heav'n,
To man, for his advantage, giv'n;
Into one form, of gen'ral creed,
And worſhip, from corruption freed;
They were not long with this delighted,
But obſtinate, they diſunited.
This, in the Scripture plainly ſees,
God's irreverſible decrees;

By which one part of th' world is ſent
To bliſs; t'other to puniſhment:
And this, by th' predetermination,
Of Heaven's cauſeleſs arbitration.
That, does all virtue ſuperſede,
And ſubſtitutes a certain Creed;
To which thoſe men who do adhere,
In wickedneſs may perſevere;
And yet their claim be ne'er the leſs,
To all the Goſpel promiſes.
A third, finds out conſubſtantiation,
A fourth, ſome ſtrange illumination;
Which, once infus'd, does then diſpenſe
With ev'ry Chriſtian ordinance.
Whilſt ſome, more violent, do cloſe
With ev'ry thing that does oppoſe,
A faith and practice once deem'd Popiſh,
No matter if divine or foppiſh;
As if the further they retir'd
From Rome, the more they were inſpir'd.
For Rome a bugbear proves to thoſe,
As does a man of ſtraw to crows;
Or as Raw-head and Bloody-bone,
To children when they're left alone.
And in idea being moſt frightful,
That's cauſe enough to uſe it ſpiteful.

But 'tis not Rome makes all this pother,
One church reform'd condemns another;
Each has a certain ſign of grace,
Whether from garb, or turn of face;
To which all others being but ſtrangers,
It very much the ſoul endangers.
Has myſt'ries too, and can define 'em,
By *argumentum baculinum.*
That is, if ſhe's oblig'd to try
This moſt ſpecific remedy.
The prim Fanatic does cry down
The Preſbyterian band and gown;
Whilſt Preſbyter, in turn, believes,
There's Pop'ry lurking in lawn ſleeves.
For he's as much averſe to a mitre,
As viſcid humours are to nitre.
He owns a mitre makes men great,
Encircles them with pomp and ſtate;
What then — for worth he'll not rely on't,
'Till ſtilts can make a dwarf a giant;
Or 'till a vane upon a ſpire,
Turns gold by being plac'd the higher.
At Popiſh robes the Churchman flouts,
Calls them the Whore of Babel's clouts;
And would not riſque his precious ſoul,
To clothe himſelf in alb or ſtole.

With confidence the Kirk ſays, I know
My orders are *jure divino*;
Whilſt th' Engliſh church, in revelation,
Can ſee Prelatic ordination.
The Preſbyter good works enjoins,
But merit from the act purloins.
Whilſt Churchmen think God does diſpenſe
Rewards for man's obedience.
Whilſt that affirms God will reject,
All ſons of men but the elect;
Although in faith and charity,
They Chriſtians true appear to be.
This thinks that God for ever choſe,
All for his own alike, of thoſe
Who lov'd, and ſtrove to do his will,
And did repent when they'd done ill.
One does extempore implore,
By pray'rs made half an age before.
Whilſt t'other takes an eaſier taſk,
And has a ſtated form to aſk.
This, at the name of Jeſus bows,
That, no ſuch lowlineſs allows.
One kneels when mercy he'd beſeech,
T'other ſits careleſs on his breech.
This one admits a croſs and ring,
The other ſuffers no ſuch thing.

In baptiſm both have diff'rent ſponſors.
And thus you ſee the ſchiſm at once, Sirs.
Theſe are the mighty conteſts, which,
So much the Chriſtian world bewitch;
That, like to Babel's curſe, the brother,
And ſon, and ſire, miſtake each other;
Whilſt ev'ry ſect, for its own party,
Is ſo vociferous and hearty;
So proud, imperious, and unquiet,
And all times ready for a riot;
That each her oppoſite aſſails,
Except the law does pare her nails.
If Chriſtians thus can cruel be,
Why raiſe we fanes to Charity?
Let me this virtue ſtill retain,
I'll ne'er of ignorance complain.

The ARGUMENT *of the* TWELFTH CANTO.

First Union of the Chriſtian State,
Now turn'd to rancour, feuds, and hate;
Virtue was then the chief purſuit,
Now Modes and Forms create diſpute.

CANTO XII.

THUS the infernal friend of liars
Beſtrews the world with thorns and briars;
Which in the Chriſtian church creates
Invidious wrangles and debates.
And briar like, no fruit produce,
That to the world can be of uſe.

The Chriſtian Church, in days of yore,
Afforded balm for ev'ry ſore;
And the Apoſtles primitive
Did milk to infant Chriſtians give;
But now their ſucceſſors impart,
No food to th' ſoul but what is tart;
Which always ſours its meditations,
And taints its pious inclinations.

Although ſuccinct th' Apoſtle's Creed,
Now like a tree from muſtard ſeed,

Which

Which has in fruitful ſoil been ſown,
To ſuch a monſtrous ſize it's grown,
That its Profeſſors, helter ſkelter,
Beneath its branches ſeek for ſhelter.
From hence the problematic Scholar,
With mind impregnated with choler,
Drew his polemical inventions,
Which malice rais'd, and fierce contentions;
And did the holy Canaan pillage,
Like an Attorney in a village,
Whoſe principles and daily act is,
To ſwerve men's judgment and their practice.
Beneath this ſhelter alſo dwells,
The ſchool Theology of cells;
Where Melancholy daily reigns,
And phantoms fill the ſullen brains.
From hence ariſe that bluſtering nonſenſe,
Which cozens the bewilder'd conſcience;
With all that frivolous bombaſting,
Of pilgrimages, ſcourging, faſting,
Penance, and all that worthleſs droſs,
Which paſs for doctrines of the Croſs.
Here likewiſe ſhelter'd you may ſee
Divine inſpir'd Theology;
Whoſe frantic friends by impulſe find
Th' intentions of the heav'nly mind;

And are ſo vers'd in revelation,
They'll caſt the ſcheme of man's ſalvation;
And by phyſiognomy can tell,
In whom the marks of grace do dwell.
Another with a good deſign
To make the lamp of Truth to ſhine,
And ſhew a more reſplendent light,
Extinguiſh it by ſnuffing quite;
And like a juſt expiring link,
Leaves them in darkneſs and in ſtink.
Such are the crazy whims and notions
That men obſerve in their devotions;
And ſuch the ſpoil and devaſtation,
Opinion makes on Revelation.
Strange that a creature, bleſs'd with pow'r
To meditate but for an hour,
Should charge a God both wiſe and mild
With laws ſo ſenſeleſs, harſh, and wild.
Not e'en an Epicure, intent
To give ſatyric ſpleen a vent,
Could in a light more ſportive place him,
Nor yet more thoroughly diſgrace him.
Charron, a Popiſh Prieſt, avers,
That when a Church in worſhip errs,
It from a worthleſs notion ſprings
Of God; which generally brings

His attributes upon a plan
With the infirmities of man.
From ſuch blaſphemous profanation,
Aroſe angelic mediation;
Founded, no doubt, on this opinion,
That God, in his ſupreme dominion,
By a Prime Miniſter does govern,
Like a terreſtrial Prince or Sovereign;
Or rather from a groſs conviction,
Of God's neglect or loco-fiction.
From hence has that opinion roſe,
That the Almighty always choſe
Exceſſive faſtings, lacerations,
Pilgrimages, mortifications,
With ſuch diſtracted exerciſes,
But from the notion that God prizes
The pains and torments of his creature,
As unrelenting in his nature?
Could any thinking man agree,
That God from all eternity
Unjuſtly in the world has cramm'd
Millions to live and then be damn'd?
And that without a retroſpection,
To their obedience or defection?
This thought does the Supreme diſgrace,
With foibles of the human race;

Draws

Draws men from their divine allegiance,
And countenances diſobedience;
Does all the goſpel precepts maim,
And ſenſual anarchy proclaim.
If ſome in bliſs are born to reign,
And others in infernal pain;
Then all ſolicitude is idle,
T' indulge our humours, or to bridle.
Or if the merciful redemption
Of Chriſt, was clogg'd with ſuch exemption,
Then 'tis a duty but of ſome,
To uſe theſe words — "Thy kingdom come."
And hence it is, perhaps, ſome ne'er
Repeat the Creed, or the Lord's Pray'r.
If at our laſt expiring breath
The apprehenſions of Chriſt's death
Tranſlates us inſtantly to bliſs,
Then none may dread to act amiſs.
But then this Antinomian gin
Makes Chriſt the Miniſter of Sin.
'Tis not profane, nor yet divine,
To paint a croſs, or make its ſign;
Unleſs 'twas done to thwart the Devil,
Or cure diſeaſes, --- then 'tis evil.
For men in this are apt to place
More truſt than in an Act of Grace.

As ſome nail horſe-ſhoes at their door,
To keep the houſe from elves ſecure.
Nor can it be a dreadful thing,
In wedlock to apply the ring;
No more than if a golden wedge,
Was giv'n as plighted faith a pledge.
Nor have I ever underſtood,
That either corner cap, or hood;
Or band, or gown, or caſſock black,
Or ſurplice white, upon the back;
Could violate the church's laws,
Or give the wearer horns and claws.
Nor yet can reaſon well ſuppoſe,
That there is virtue in ſuch cloaths.
Then why ſhould enmities commence,
For things of ſuch indifference?
Since Revelation diſallows
No genu-flections, garbs, or bows;
Nor ſhews which Heav'n holds moſt befitting,
To pray or kneeling, ſtanding, ſitting.
Since in the mode there is nor vice
Nor virtue,—why are we ſo nice?
Or from ſuch trifles dare preſage,
That Heaven will on our parts engage?
Where ſuch punctilios moſt abound,
No charity or mercy's found;

Which

Which being th' *omega* and the *alpha*
Of Chriſt's religion; he's not half a
True diſciple; and ſuch, I dare ſay,
Will look, in vain, to Heav'n for mercy.
The ſuperſtitions of the Jews,
Led them all cruelties to uſe;
For never did they want a Seer,
To ſpur them on to acts ſevere;
'Gainſt all who did not circumciſe,
And join them in their ſacrifice;
Whom they as reprobates denoted,
And victims to their rage devoted.
The Papiſts, too, who, by degrees,
Brought in a thouſand pageantries,
Which true Chriſtianity deface,
And yet in all ſome virtue place;
Their ſpeculations to ſupport,
To matchleſs cruelties reſort.
So 'mongſt the ſons of Reformation,
Thoſe moſt attach'd to ſpeculation,
Without regard to actions moral,
Are moſt moroſe, and prone to quarrel.
For previous to the Revolution,
A cruel whim of perſecution,
Did all the Proteſtants poſſeſs,
'Bout ceremonies, modes, and dreſs;

As if thoſe friv'lous rites did purchaſe,
God's chiefeſt bleſſings to his churches.
Sure ignorance by far is better,
Than thus to miſconceive the letter;
Or make eternal wiſdom prize,
What grov'ling reaſon muſt deſpiſe.

The ARGUMENT *of the* THIRTEENTH CANTO.

The Pride of Man regenerate,
And born anew in his Conceit,
Contraſted by the meek Demeanour
Found in a ſelf-convicted Sinner.

CANTO XIII.

IS this th' Almighty arm'd with thunder,
Who cleft the weeping rock aſunder;
And, cloath'd with lightning, did recount
The Decalogue on Sinai's Mount;
At whoſe command the earth did yawn,
And ſwallow'd Dathan and his ſpawn;
And the refulgent lamp of day
Did its career obedient ſtay;
As likewiſe did the lamp of night,
To give his General Joſhua light,
To make a maſſacre of thoſe,
Who to his holy Church were foes?
Is this the God, whoſe wiſdom, Job
Declares, on nothing hung the globe?

Can

Can he with trifles be amus'd,
And ſee true piety abus'd;
By ſubſtituting bows and cringes,
With the appendages and fringes
Of worſhip, which pragmatic zeal
Has tack'd to what he did reveal?
Make Bigotry a fit ingredient,
And Superſtition an expedient,
By which his votaries muſt climb,
To joys eternal and ſublime?
With this opinion fraught, I've known
A ſlovenly and crabbed drone,
With long, lank, ſleek, and greaſy hair,
Which with a horſe-tail might compare;
His phiz be-duſted o'er with flour,
Like him, with hieroglyphic hour-
-Glaſs in his hand; ſo fam'd in ſtory,
Whoſe motto is,—*Memento Mori*;
His ſooty ſhirt, on Sunday ſhifted,
And that was all, ſince he was gifted;
Nor comb'd his head, nor waſh'd his face
But once a week, ſince he had grace.
All holy lectures he frequented,
And firſt the ſolemn groan invented;
And from that happy omen found,
His ſoul was like a conch-ſhell ſound.

This

This made him negligent and vain,
And look on ſinners with diſdain;
As well he might, for being a new man,
He ſomething more commenc'd than human;
And all the ſins he perpetrated,
Were to the account of Chriſt tranſlated;
For Saints affirm, that, like a pack,
Chriſt bears their ſins upon his back;
And penalties, by commutation,
To ſuch become regeneration.
'Twas his opinion, that nobody
Grew wiſe, or rich, by care and ſtudy;
But true wealth ſprung from inſpiration,
Not diligence in occupation.
So whilſt he pray'd he did not watch,
And therefore often ſpoil'd a batch;
(For he a Baker was by calling,)
But zeal could not prevent his falling,
To poverty I mean, for ſin
And he were nothing now a-kin.
Zeal rather ſtifles all his cares,
And thoughts of family affairs;
Fills him with gloom, his temper leavens,
And things to ſixes go, and ſevens.
He grew ſo indigent and poor,
He ſcarce could keep the wolf from door;

Nor would the holy flock, or paſtor,
Who brought upon him this diſaſter,
His broken circumſtance repair,
Becauſe of Heaven they'd made him heir.
Although a bankrupt, he was haughty,
As ſome were humble from being faulty;
And as cenſorious as kept miſtreſs,
(Who ſtill knows manners when in diſtreſs;)
Whilſt he will neither ſtoop nor brook,
To give, e'en Heaven, an humble look.
  See him contraſted by a poor
Benighted ſoul, that liv'd next door;
Whoſe Chriſtian knowledge was ſo ſmall,
Some thought 'twas next to none at all;
Yet he own'd God, and did adore him,
Juſt as his father did before him;
For what he had imbib'd in youth,
He took for granted to be truth:
His faith in nothing did exceed
The bounds of the Apoſtle's Creed.
To him God's preſcience and decrees
Were metaphyſic ſubtleties.
He know no myſteries ſpecific,
More than Egyptian hieroglyphic;
Nor comprehended the Homouſes,
More than the planets and their houſes:

But ſtill he thought the ſoul, endu'd
With reaſon, ſhould, in gratitude,
For benefits conferr'd upon her,
Be thankful to the heavenly donor:
He therefore never ſlept before
He God's protection did implore;
Nor did he fail, when firſt he 'woke,
God's daily bleſſings to invoke.
The Sabbath-day he did devote
To worſhip God in his beſt coat;
When to the poor-box or a brief
He never once deny'd relief.
Nor was his conſcience lac'd ſo tight,
To make him ſpend that day and night
In ſinging godly hymns at home
When church was done, but he would roam
Into the fields, his cares to ſooth,
Or viſited ſome village booth;
And with a friend would there regale,
On penſive pipe, and cheering ale.
Thus innocent his Chriſtian plan;
But Nature did complete the man,
He had a placid diſpoſition,
And was content in his condition;
And as his conduct gave no handle
For any, but his neighbour's ſcandal,

So never did he once proclaim,
What gave one mortal grief or ſhame;
But conſtru'd ev'ry error ſtill,
A lapſe in judgment, not in will.
Each ſigh diſtreſs'd, or ſickly groan,
By ſympathy became his own;
And if his purſe deny'd relief,
It added doubly to his grief.
Although with thrift his table ſpread,
Some poor from thence had daily bread;
And he beſtow'd a ſecret penny,
Like widow's mite, each day to many;
And thus, by offices benign,
He made his light conſpicuous ſhine.
But ſtill he kept a conſcious ſenſe
Of guilt, and its dread conſequence:
And thus by meek deportment ſhew'd
His houſe no modern Saint's abode.
While thus the Phariſee did thank
His God he was not in the rank
Of thoſe who did extortion uſe,
(That ſin endemial of the Jews,)
He ne'er defil'd the marriage bed,
But, by the laws of conſcience led,
He tythes of all his ſubſtance paid,
And faſted twice a week, and pray'd;

Not like that Publican, who ne'er
Did faſt, pay tythes, or ſay a pray'r.
The Publican juſt ſmote his breaſt,
And humbly own'd he had tranſgreſs'd;
Entreating mercy from the ſkies,
With heart erect, and down-caſt eyes;
Which contrite act was juſtify'd,
Before ſuch phariſaic pride.
From zeal in trifles men ſuppoſe,
Our modern libertines aroſe;
For theſe obſerving ſome to plume
Themſelves upon a ſullen gloom;
Others to lay a rigid ſtreſs
In formal mode of phraſe and dreſs;
To ſee ſome ſtubbornly avow,
No ſin ſo heinous as a bow;
And for a ſtiff neck firmly ſtickle,
When Chriſt is nam'd in conventicle.
In which moſt righteous cauſe, a gruff
Old holy wight, will kick and cuff;
And jolt, and joſtle, friend and ſtranger,
That none approach him but with danger.
And being as fond of his religion,
As was Mahomet of his pigeon;
He like a bully with his dowdy,
Will let no mortal man ſay—How d'ye?

But like a fond unthinking ſpark,
Adores his miſtreſs in the dark;
Whilſt ev'ry other Chriſtian pupil,
Bows at the name with ſolemn ſcruple:
Though idly ſome a virtue place,
In turning eaſtward then their face;
As if their God did there abide,
And in no other place beſide.
To think that God ſhould recognize
Such worthleſs whims and fooleries,
'Bout which the headſtrong Chriſtian rabble,
Do daily ſchiſmatize and ſquabble;
Muſt lead men rather to deplore
That heavenly plan they ſhould adore;
And deem that revelation ſpurious,
That can in trifles be ſo curious.
For not a doubt from thence can riſe,
Whether the ſoul exiſts or dies,
When from the body 'tis divided,
For this e'en Heathens have decided;
And Libertines, on their death-bed,
Do moſt of all this doctrine dread:
But when each trifling whim and dream
Becomes a Revelation ſcheme;
This does the Libertine provoke,
To deem Chriſtianity a joke;

And, as a plan of worſhip, loaded
With uſeleſs modes, it is exploded.
No doctrine, though from Heaven pretended,
With ſuch pernicious tenets blended,
Though iſſu'd in with pomp of thunder,
And all the ſcenes of dread and wonder,
Could o'er my dubious mind ſucceed,
Or influence my ſtubborn Creed;
To die in Ignorance I'd chuſe,
Before my reaſon thus abuſe.

The ARGUMENT *of the* FOURTEENTH CANTO.

Virtue admir'd in ev'ry Clime;
But, when too rigid, proves a Crime:
Exemplify'd in Furioſo,
Whoſe Character you'll find, but ſo ſo.

CANTO XIV.

ALL Sophiſts of the Stoic brood,
Say Virtue is the chiefeſt good;
That Vice is but a painted whore,
Gaudy without, within impure;
Pleaſing to all that do addreſs her,
But ruins moſt that do careſs her;
Who, for their worſhip at her altar,
Are oft rewarded with a halter.
'Gainſt this the Sophiſts of the Devil,
Say Virtue is the greateſt evil;
That thirſt and hunger, whips and chains,
Are the rewards of virtuous pains;
For thoſe who moſt in her delighted,
Are jilted commonly, and ſlighted.

Thoſe ſpeak from love, but theſe from ſpite;
Now tell me, Sceptic, which is right?
Which the beſt miſtreſs, ſhe that's chaſte,
Or ſhe that jilts you at the laſt?
Vice, which the human ſoul degrades,
And plunges in th' infernal ſhades;
Or the purſuit of Virtue, which
Exalts it to the nobleſt pitch?
Virtue may be or bad or good,
Juſt as the thing is underſtood;
There's nothing can be more illuſive,
Or of the human mind abuſive.
For as in coins too much alloy,
Does the intrinſic worth deſtroy;
So Virtue, when it's miſapply'd,
To Vice becomes too near ally'd.
Thus Furioſo ſpends his rage,
'Gainſt the corruptions of the age;
He vows no time was ever known,
When Vice was half ſo rampant grown;
That Chriſtians, with leſs riſque, may venture,
A plague-infected houſe to enter,
Than their immortal ſouls expoſe,
To Heaven's premeditated foes.
Thus in belief, or humour croſs'd,
He gave th' opponents up for loſt;

As if a patent God had ſign'd,
To make him cenſor of mankind.
When o'er his beer he kick'd and flung,
And ſuch a peal of jargon rung,
That thoſe who did not with him think,
With eaſe could neither eat nor drink,
Or be in the ſame room at all,
Unleſs 'twas like Weſtminſter Hall.
But reaſon, and the ſacred code,
As vicious ſuch an act explode;
For as true loyalty's degraded,
So true devotion's maſqueraded;
When that in alehouſe makes a pother,
Or in conventicle the other.
For virtues ſo ſublime and great,
May juſtly claim a better ſeat.
Yet ſtill Furioſo acted right,
He took his whims for Goſpel light;
And took for Virtue, Inclination,
Though this with that had no relation;
And would renounce his Chriſtian name,
Before his waſpiſh freak reclaim.
But ſuch a conduct ſhould not be
The meaſure of Chriſtianity;
Nor ſhould we load her with our puns,
For acts of her wrong-headed ſons;

Since

Since none from Pettifoggers draw,
Concluſions to diſgrace the law;
Nor the Galenic art derides,
Or wounds, through the Empiric's ſides.
But Vice and Virtue, I deny,
Do barely in opinion lye;
For Virtue ſtood in veneration,
Before the Chriſtian Revelation;
And kept the Heathen world in awe,
By Reaſon's ſempeternal law.
If Hatred, Malice, and Deceit,
Were vices only in conceit;
And Murther, Rapine, and Oppreſſion,
Were noxious only by conceſſion;
Then how came all mankind t' approve,
Of Meekneſs, Temp'rance, Peace and Love?
'Gainſt which, St. Paul has truly ſaid,
There never any law was made.
If, as the ſacred lines rehearſe,
God ſteers this floating univerſe;
In which, like Noah in the ark,
Mankind as paſſengers embark;
To the empyreal haven bound,
Where everlaſting treaſure's found;
Then, as in all ſhips there muſt be,
Subordinate œconomy;

So

So people in their paſſage here,
This heavenly pilot ſhould revere.
And now to Reaſon let's apply,
And from her faithful dictates try;
If 'tis an act as good, and great,
This Ruler of the World to hate;
And walk contemptuouſly before him,
As 'tis to worſhip and adore him?
If Envy, and Ingratitude,
Malice, and all th' infernal brood
Of vices, that corrupt the mind,
Would prove as uſeful to mankind,
Promote as firm a union,
As Love and Goodneſs ſtill have done?
If not, we may conclude from thence,
That nature form'd a difference;
And 'tis this univerſal vote,
That Vice from Virtue can denote.
Obſerve the cuſtoms of all ages,
You'll find the venerable Sages
Of every nation under Heaven,
To Piety and Juſtice given.
Were temp'rate, grateful, and humane,
Not irreligious, or profane;
No gluttons, or exceſſive drinkers,
Nor Atheiſts, though they were Free-thinkers.

And

And from this conduct, though not Nero's,
Yet they became, or gods, or heroes.
  However plain this nat'ral ſenſe
Of Virtue, yet 'tis no defence
Againſt the furious and abrupt
Attacks of nature when corrupt.
For, in that ſtate, mankind have try'd all
Manner of worſhip by an idol;
And ſuperſtition does benight,
The pureſt rays of goſpel light.
  But this does not the fact confute,
For man, diſpos'd to act the brute,
Will to his luſts become a ſlave,
And ev'ry noble ſenſe deprave.
  If Anaxagoras would ſhew,
That black the colour is of ſnow;
Not twenty thouſand of that mind,
Could ſwerve the reaſon of mankind.
Self-preſervation, too, is link'd
With Nature, and is call'd Inſtinct;
Yet many have this law deny'd,
And fall'n by acts of ſuicide.
But this will not as proof ſuffice,
That Vice is Virtue, Virtue Vice.
  Let any perſon, if he can,
Point out the woman, or the man,

Who has not ſuffer'd in repute,
By falſe, and foul, malicious bruit.
But if ſuſpicion thus can place,
The inoffenſive in diſgrace;
Much more obnoxious then muſt be,
The brazen-fronted Debauchee.
For Nature holds Vice in ſuch ſcorn,
That ev'n a rude Siberian born,
Would think he had been treated quite ill,
Was Lewdneſs added to his title.
Nor yet did ever man agree,
To ſcandalize an enemy;
And then lay juſtice to his charge,
Or on his chaſtity enlarge.
For though they ſeldom practis'd are,
Such virtues ſtand in judgment fair.
And though ſome frantic Poet may
Virtue belye,—and falſely ſay,
The Letcher, or the Reprobate,
Are men of value in a ſtate;
Yet thoſe who are more ſerious, muſt
Behold ſuch men with great diſguſt.
Why the Almighty ſuffer'd Vice,
At firſt to enter Paradiſe;
Or, e'er it had poſſeſs'd the earth,
Did not ſuppreſs it in the birth;

Or

Or ſend it inſtantly to Hell,
Would poſe the wiſeſt man to tell?
Which evidently does enhance,
The meaſure of our ignorance.
Manes, to clear this doubt, maintain'd,
Two principles diſcordant reign'd;
One did all moral Good compriſe,
Whilſt from the other Ill did riſe;
And thought by this colluſive whim,
To keep the tott'ring world in trim.
Juſt ſo the Milaneſe Phyſician
Did keep the world in good condition;
And would preſerve it from confuſion,
By violence, or elſe colluſion.
He found that one ambitious Son
Was by another ſtill undone;
One man of violence or law,
Did keep the turbulent in awe;
One knave did always countermine
Another in his dark deſign:
Maintaining thus a ſtrange poſition,
That concord ſprung from oppoſition.
But let not ſtrangers be addreſs'd,
For what's engrafted in our breaſt;
For if we carefully attend,
We'll find that all our acts depend

Invariably

Invariably upon the will,
Which conſtitutes them good or ill.
If at all times we do endeavour
To act upright, then we can never
A future puniſhment expect,
For impotency or neglect.
Then why ſhould any gloomy agent,
O'er oblique actions ſtill be regent?
Or why ſhould Nature bear all thoſe
Defects, that ſtill from Habit roſe?
'Tis ſaid, indeed, Prometheus ſtole
Celeſtial fire to make a ſoul,
To animate th' imperfect plan,
Of God's creative wonders, Man.
And if this ſtory had affinity,
With œcumenical divinity,
We might the workmanſhip arraign
With freedom, and not be profane.
For ſo the pious Bards of old,
Thoſe riddles did with eaſe unfold.
Why do we ſuch perverſeneſs find,
And folly in the human mind?
Why ſuch ambition there, and pride,
And why in luſt to beaſts ally'd?
Why drunkards, gluttons, and rapacious?
Why cheats, impoſtors, and fallacious?

The Plaſtic Artiſt was the cauſe,
His erring hand firſt made theſe flaws.
Whether 'twas chance, or elſe intended,
He in the compoſition blended
The clay of fifty diff'rent creatures,
Which gave a ſpice of all their natures.
Thus mythologic Heathens ſtrove
T'exculpate their Almighty Jove.
But as with botchers 'tis the caſe,
To mend one hole they make a brace;
So freeing Jove from ſuch a blunder,
They keep Omnipotency under.
For if he was not coadjutor,
He muſt, at leaſt, have ſtood by neuter;
Or could not uſe his pow'r in hamp'ring
Prometheus, in his ſcheme of tamp'ring.
In either caſe the weight of blame
Muſt fall upon the Pow'r Supreme;
Who with the act did he diſpenſe,
Should anſwer for the conſequence;
Nor was he worthy, if controul'd,
The reins of government to hold.
But who can think this conduct odd,
Since Chriſtians thus diſgrace their God?
To whoſe account they thoughtleſs place
Actions, that Moloch would diſgrace.

The Sophs of ſev'ral tribes agree,
Perfective Nature cannot be;
And where imperfect Nature's found,
Evil, of courſe, muſt there abound.
Thoſe, then, who wantonly enquire,
Why ſin prevails? may ſtill go higher;
And aſk, why God at firſt did rear,
From atoms periſhing, this ſphere?
Or why mankind was form'd at firſt,
With bodily propenſions curs'd?
Nay—the Almighty may be twitted,
Why he a being at all permitted;
Since ev'ry thing that was created,
To imperfection is related.
But this would impious be, and daring,
Finite with infinite comparing;
For minds which dark conceptions ſully,
See not apparent cauſes fully.
And as at bottom of a ſtream,
A ſtick, though ſtrait, will crooked ſeem;
So perfect will imperfect baſon,
Through the dark teleſcope of reaſon;
For nothing but Infinity
Can infinite connexions ſee.
What's known of Nature, though profound,
Appears both rational and ſound;

There plainly runs a wiſe deſign,
Through ev'ry part,—through ev'ry line:
So if I had a book diſclos'd,
With order and good ſenſe compos'd;
Through which ſome paragraphs were ſown,
In characters to me unknown;
When reading on, I came to thoſe,
I'd paſs them over, and ſuppoſe,
They did the ſame good ſenſe contain,
That in the major part did reign.
And this from reaſons, *a priori*,
Which I ſhould chuſe to admit, before I
Should ſlight thoſe arguments, and look
For two compoſers of that book.

Juſt ſo God's works are all as good,
As could within their ſphere have ſtood;
Imperfect as to th' Deity,
Yet perfect each in its degree.

From nat'ral evils, too, may grow,
More good than harm, for aught we know;
And moral ills we can't defame,
'Cauſe if they hurt us—we're to blame;
To ſhun the dangers of temptation,
We Reaſon have, and Revelation;
Alſo the power of good or evil;
Of being the ſons of God or Devil.

We're

We're free to follow, as we've choice,
The ways of Virtue, or of Vice.
'Tis hence we look for God's regard,
Either to puniſh, or reward,
As he thinks fit;—this had not been,
Had man been form'd a mere machine;
To good or harm had we been ty'd,
God could not praiſe us, nor yet chide;
To chuſe and act we muſt be free,
Or good or bad we cannot be;
'Tis hence that beaſts we do excel,
'Tis hence we hope for Heav'n or Hell.
If, then, in varying Nature's ſpite,
All her phænomena are right;
At nothing let me take offence,
But ſtill depend on Providence;
And let me ignorant remain,
Before a doctrine entertain,
Though chriſtian call'd, which does confute,
Of Heav'n a darling attribute.

The ARGUMENT *of the* FIFTEENTH CANTO.

A Man of Thought, and ſober Breeding,
Is rally'd by a Man of Reading;
The Origin of Souls debated,
With diff'rent Sorts that are created.

CANTO XV.

IF Vice and Virtue be the ſame,
And differ not, except in name;
This plain concluſion then we have,
That there's no life beyond the grave;
But when a man reſigns his breath,
The ſoul's annih'lated in death.

This is maintain'd by Epicurus;
And his diſciples now aſſure us,
That as the horrid faith of ghoſts,
Its origin from nurs'ry boaſts;
So all th' infernal liſt of woes,
From this infectious ſpring aroſe.
'Twas there a future life began,
By which the child deludes the man;

And now the Prieſts, thoſe groundleſs fears,
Are dinning daily in our ears.
" No wonder, then, ſays Antigerſis,
That all the teſtamental verſes,
Which everlaſting flames deſcribe,
Should ſcare a nurſe-inſtructed tribe.
Although the canon law of Moſes,
Deſcribes not Hell, nor one ſuppoſes;
Nor did a Prophet broach the news,
As I have heard, among the Jews.
This learned Warburton doth ſhew,
As Sadoc's ſons did long ago;
But ſome mens reading is too ſcant,
Their childiſh notions to ſupplant."
Thus Antigerſis ſtrove to maim,
The pillar of the Chriſtian ſcheme;
Gave his inſidious tenets vent,
As he with friends the evening ſpent.
This Blade was ſprightly, I aſſure you,
And that, *tam Marte quam Mercurio*;
For he had borne the King's commiſſion,
And was a Soldier of condition;
And ſcarce twelve months a ſaſh had wore,
When he Chriſtianity forſwore;
And did to reputation climb,
By ridiculing things ſublime;

For he, by rant profane, was able,
To prove Chriſtianity a fable;
And Hell a politic bugbear,
To keep th' illiterate rout in fear.
And thus with folly ſtock'd, and pride,
The plaineſt Goſpel truths deny'd.
He form'd in his capacious mind
A ſcheme to diſabuſe mankind,
And free them from th' enthralling curſe
Of Prieſt, Spleen, Pedagogue, and Nurſe;
So always ſtrove with witleſs face,
To ridicule the Sons of Grace;
And prais'd an impious act and word,
As flies ſlight tanzies for a t—d:
Though vile the food, 'tis natural,
To ſuch a filthy animal.
Piſtiſeros, a youth inclin'd,
With mirth to recreate the mind;
'Mongſt chearful friends did oft reſort,
And join'd in ev'ry harmleſs ſport;
But gave Religion no offence,
Nor pawn'd for Pleaſure, Innocence.
The doctrines in his youth imbib'd,
In age he practis'd and ſubſcrib'd;
Nor could example e'er deface,
The firſt impreſſions made of Grace.

This

This hopeful youth, who had been there,
Such rant unhallow'd could not bear,
But with a mild and placid look,
Diſcharg'd his truſt with this rebuke.

" That can't, my friend, be call'd a joke,
Which gives offence as ſoon as ſpoke.
Though all the Chriſtian ſcheme's become
As obſolete as that of Rome;
Though it's deſpis'd by men of faſhion,
As an unpoliſh'd ſpeculation;
Yet, as to Baal you may ſee,
Seven thouſand did not bend the knee;
So ſeventy times that ſum, and more,
Eternal life, through Chriſt, implore.
And as you can't, beyond all doubt,
That they are wrong in this make out;
A ſlender portion of diſcretion
Would make you doubt your own profeſſion;
And not the Chriſtian ſyſtem blame,
For doctrines that you can't diſclaim;
As if before your reſolutions,
You drew from premiſes concluſions;
Whereas ingenuouſly you muſt
Allow you diſbelieve on truſt;
And did an Infidel commence,
Uninfluenc'd by evidence.

" If you've receiv'd a conſcious mind,
Superior to the brutal kind,
Which, I ſuppoſe, you'll not deny,
From th' intellectual faculty;
And that concatenated ſource
Of thought, reflection, and diſcourſe;
This excellence ſhould n't you devote,
To worſhip him who did beſtow 't?
And not employ ſuch glorious light,
T' indulge a brutiſh appetite?"

" That canting puritannic phraſe,
A talent to declame diſplays,
Says Antigerſis, and that ſkill
Would ſuitably the pulpit fill.
Pr'ythee let that brocade and lace
Give to the gown and caſſock place;
Abandon, too, that martial favour,
For holy roſe and gummy beaver;
Procure an honorary hood,
'Twill be in all reſpects as good,
As one of time and ſtudy's purchaſe,
And look as flaunting in the churches;
It will imply the Holy Spirit,
Or ſhare ſuperlative of merit:
Aſſume a grave and ſolemn face,
And thus you will the pulpit grace.

Or, if you cannot get ordain'd,
Let inſpiration then be feign'd;
Compoſe your phyz and voice aright,
Chief characteriſtics of new light;
Th' authoritative power aſſume,
Which all the world condemns in Rome;
And, confident of your ſalvation,
Deal Hell to others, and damnation.
Unauthoriz'd by Man, or God,
Turn vagrant preacher of the ſod:
Then with pedantic rage and prattle,
'Gainſt vice unmercifully rattle;
The ſwearing debauchee upbraid,
And piety turn into trade;
Thy doctrine with thy intereſt ſuit,
And whine yourſelf into repute;
Whilſt all th' applauſe you merit, flows
From gouty haggs, and batter'd beaux.
Though proud, affect an humble mien,
Be charitable out of ſpleen;
Thoſe morals publicly diſdain,
Which you in private entertain;
For worldly goods contempt expreſs,
Whilſt you purſue them to exceſs;
Exclaim 'gainſt hereſy, and then do
Extol the ſtatute, *comburendo*;

Call

Call the eſtabliſh'd church accurs'd,
(As whore is known to cry whore firſt);
Prove her to Babel's whore ally'd;
Her Prieſts the hireling ſons of pride;
Rage like Gibellin at a Guelph,
And others rob t' adorn thyſelf;
And when equipt by ſtealth, aſſume
The raven's airs, with borrow'd plume;
Encircled by your bigot crew,
Be Prophet, Saint, for who but you.
This will give currency to nonſenſe,
And ſatisfy a doubting conſcience;
The ſplendor of ſo great a light,
Muſt lead a congregation right.

" And now, ſince I have dubb'd you Doctor,
In ſpight of Chancellor or Proctor;
Say, ſcarlet hood, then — What's the Soul?
—*'Tis whole in whole, in all parts whole.*
Better account we vainly wiſh;
What vague and ſenſeleſs gibberiſh!
But purge our eyes from darkning miſts,
Say what ſhe is, and how ſubſiſts?
When death the vital knot unties,
Reſolve us where the ſpirit flies?
Declare, if through infinite ſpace
She roves, or is confin'd to place?

If

If ſtill in eſſence ſhe's the ſame,
As when ſhe rul'd this mortal frame?
Whether ſhe comes by propagation,
Or by celeſtial inſpiration?
Or if the man his ſoul receives
From th' ſun, which life to inſects gives?
Or, like the brute creation, whether
The ſoul and body die together?"

" Your ſneers upon the Sacred Order,
Piſtiſeros ſays, too cloſely border
Upon profaneneſs, and break through
The rules of Truth and Juſtice too.

" But your propenſity to find
The nature of the human mind,
Conſiſts with that cæleſtial gleam,
That dignifies the human frame;
And if you aſk for information,
'Tis laudable—with moderation.
Such nice enquiries have been found,
In ev'ry period to abound;
And all the philoſophic Sages,
Both of the paſt and preſent ages,
The ſoul through mazes did purſue,
With as much diligence as you;
And with as trivial ſucceſs,
For their conceits were built on gueſs.

" Nature's

" Nature's creative Lord diſpenſes
Myſterious objects to the ſenſes;
And has implanted in our boſom,
A thirſt t' unravel and peruſe 'em.
Our curioſity does probe,
The hidden ſecrets of the globe;
And can the ſtars and comets trace,
Through infinite and trackleſs ſpace;
And, by aſtronomy, can run,
A thouſand years before the ſun;
And tell where Luna means to friſk,
In whole, or part, acroſs the diſk.

" Such is the excellence of ſpirit,
Which human nature does inherit;
Such the perfections of the ſoul,
It flies at once from Pole to Pole;
Can dart its view through Heav'n's expanſe,
And to ideal worlds advance.
But though it ranges boundleſs ſpace,
It can't it's own perfections trace;
But like dark-lantern, with its blaze,
All things, except itſelf, diſplays.

" 'Tis plain the heraldry of Reaſon,
Cannot the ſoul's impreſſion blazon;
Nor yet it's true deſcent e'er ſhow,
If it immortal is, or no.

But

But ſtill,—it's beſt for us to think,
It does not to perdition ſink;
And, if the Chriſtian ſcheme we own,
Its Heaven-deſcent is plainly ſhewn;
For this derives it from infuſion,
And frees it thus from diſſolution.
But ſome Philoſophers, intent,
The nat'ral man to compliment;
By generation bring it in,
As if it were the body's twin.
"But by traduction if it came,
All human ſouls would be the ſame;
For brutes, we ſee, of the ſame kind,
Have one propenſity of mind.
Nature, as with a pencil, draws
Not only the ſame horns and claws,
But makes the cubs of wolf, or bear,
Rapacious as their fathers were;
And alſo gives to doves, and lambs,
The harmleſs temper of their dams.
But Nature, ſwerving from this plan,
Acts not thus uniform in man;
A hero oft begets a coward,
And virtuous parents, ſons untoward;
Sobriety begets a ſot,
And brilliant parts an ideot;

And thus, in plaſtic Virtue's ſpite,
The Sire begets his oppoſite.
" Now ſince the ſouls which ſons inſpire,
Differ ſo widely from the ſire;
It proves *ſans* doubt, or diſputation,
They're not deriv'd from generation.
" Beſides, Philoſophers renown'd
For ſifting myſteries profound,
With all the energy of thought,
Almoſt to certainty have brought,
Thoſe myſtic queries which engage,
This infidel and prying age;
And give the ſoul a future ſtate,
When from the body ſeparate.
" If there's a Juſt Divinity,
The ſoul muſt needs immortal be;
For here you find to Tyburn led,
The hungry pilferer of bread;
Whilſt he who innocence betrays,
Departs this life replete with days;
And the abandon'd reprobate,
Enjoys the world in pomp and ſtate.
" To think th' Almighty ſhould have hurl'd
Myriads of ſouls into this world,
Great part of which do undergo,
The ſhocks of poverty and woe;

Whoſe bed a dunghill, and whoſe ermine
Is made of tatter'd rags and vermine;
Whilſt plaintive moans their dwellings fill,
Like ceaſeleſs murmurs of a rill;
'Till Death the tragic ſcene doth cloſe,
And puts a period to their woes.
— Such impious notions ſo aſperſe
The Father of the Univerſe,
That it affords no great ſurprize,
That Heathen Poets enthronize
Judges, in the Elyſian Shade,
Where ample recompence is made."
" Says Antigerſis, by your leave,
Inſtead of arguing, you rave;
For if a man of wrath, or courage,
Begets a ſon of fear, or no rage;
Or if a dunce begets a wit,
All which I readily admit:
Allowing, then, the caſe, as ſuch,
If any thing, it proves too much.
For if, like ſtars in th' heavenly ſphere,
Some human ſouls moſt glorious are;
It may, without offence, be ſaid,
'Twas Wiſdom the diſtinction made.
And, therefore, if we don't maintain,
Creative Wſdom acts in vain;

To acts thus partially benign,
We muſt ſome leading cauſe aſſign.
" And what ſo probable can be,
As that the noble ſoul is free
From all thoſe virtues and reſtraints,
Which conſtitute plebeian Saints?
— Such fooleries, I muſt confeſs,
Look well enough in cleric dreſs;
But they would ſhamefully diſgrace,
A Dreſden ruffle and gold lace.
For Virtue, in embroider'd coat,
Would drollery and ſneers promote;
Be as ridiculous and tawdry,
Except adorn'd with rant and bawdry;
As David, when he did aſſail
The giant, in Saul's coat of mail.
" Nature, which negligently ſlubbers
Over the clay deſign'd for lubbers,
Does finer ſtuff for gentry burniſh,
And this, exerts her ſkill to burniſh.
So Nature's God, who forms the mind,
Makes one to animate the Hind;
—A grov'ling—ſcoundrel diſpoſition,
Unfit for honour or ambition,
Inactive, clouterly, and baſe,
Scarce one remove from th' brutal race;

Whilſt

Whilſt that which animates the 'Squire,
To the Divinity is nigher;
In parts more ſublimate and pure,
Than thoſe of origin obſcure.
" Sure this pre-eminence of ſoul
Muſt be exempt from that controul
Of ſenſes, laid upon the peaſant,
In recreative ſports, and pleaſant;
The gentry's privilege, too, is duple,
To act unblam'd, and without ſcruple;
For excellence could ne'er be ſtampt
On ſouls, to be in pleaſure crampt;
Or prompted by fantaſtic qualms,
To ſpend our time in ſinging pſalms.
" Suppoſe a God ſuperintended
Our actions, muſt he be offended
With him who frequently endeavours
T' improve, and exerciſe his favours?
A thought like this an inſult throws
On gifts, indulgent Heaven beſtows.
" If it's incumbent on the great,
As on the poor, to ſupplicate;
We ſhould ſuppoſe that both petitions
Should have reſpect to their conditions.
The beggar, caſually fed,
Aſks properly for daily bread;

To acts thus partially benign,
We muſt ſome leading cauſe aſſign.
" And what ſo probable can be,
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" If it's incumbent on the great,
As on the poor, to ſupplicate;
We ſhould ſuppoſe that both petitions
Should have reſpect to their conditions.
The beggar, caſually fed,
Aſks properly for daily bread;

And this, with water or ſmall beer,
Is frugal and becoming cheer.
But, if above the commonality,
Men, out of cuſtom, or formality,
At church, aſk daily bread on Sunday,
Let them requeſt, too, ſome Burgundy;
But ſtill avoid ingeminations,
Unleſs for health and recreations;
For certainly as human good
By God is amply underſtood;
So if he grants us our requeſt,
'Tis what ſuits our condition beſt.
" But I'll admit what you would have,
The Soul exiſts beyond the grave;
That when it ſuffers diſſolution,
It meets a future retribution;
Becauſe Philoſophers profound,
This point with likelihood have crown'd.
But none who did philoſophize,
Maintain'd the body ſhall ariſe;
Or from corruption's dome eſcape,
And re-aſſume its priſtine ſhape.
And though ſome friends of revelation,
Will not admit of a negation;
Yet it does on the God impoſe,
Such jejune work, and operoſe;

Withal ſo idle, and abſtruſe,
Without neceſſity or uſe;
That this, and other doctrines, muſt
By your permiſſion be diſcuſt.
" To-night we'll let the ſubject paſs,
Becauſe it interrupts the glaſs;
But if you're diſengag'd at three,
To-morrow, and will dine with me,
I now invite you as my gueſt,
And then we ſhall diſcuſs the reſt."
Piſtiſeros aſſur'd his friend,
That he would certainly attend.

The ARGUMENT *of the* SIXTEENTH CANTO.

The Multiplicity of Sects,
Their Purity, and their Defects;
With an inquiſitive Inſpection
Into the Mode of Reſurrection.

CANTO XVI.

DINNER being done, and table ſpread
With flaſks of gen'rous white and red,
Piſtiſeros call'd the matter o'er,
Which was adjourn'd the night before.
" That there are two, Divines agree,
Claſſes of Infidelity;
The one in ſtate of dereliction,
The other open to conviction.
And, as a learned adage ſhews,
When man his reaſon doth oppoſe,
Reaſon, by *talionis lex*,
Will conſtantly that man perplex.
Juſt ſo, becauſe Chriſtianity
And wicked morals can't agree,

By

By wicked men it's us'd with ſpite,
And Infidels neglect it quite.
" But by your argument I find,
Your faith is of the doubtful kind;
You don't a Deity deny,
'Tis Revelation you decry;
Though 'twas the Deity's exiſtence,
That gave the Goſpel ſuch aſſiſtance,
As made its progreſs, from its riſing,
So very rapid and ſurpriſing;
For Infidels were then as oddiſh,
As now they're numerous and modiſh;
And then a Providence was priz'd,
Which now is heartily deſpis'd.
Such men as did thoſe truths receive,
Were always ready to believe
The ſins of a deprav'd aggreſſor
Did greatly need an Interceſſor.
'Twas not unnat'ral then to find,
A world perſuaded thus in mind,
With ſuch alacrity embrace,
The comfortable ſcheme of Grace.
And thus, in Perſecution's ſpite,
The world receiv'd the Goſpel light;
And, maugre all abſurd additions,
Of monſtrous tenets and poſitions,

Together with the lives injurious,
Of teachers reprobate and ſpurious;
It has Idolatry confuted,
And, 'till of late, was ne'er diſputed."
" Says Antigerſis, I conceit,
We ſoon ſhall finiſh this debate;
For in the Chriſtian Church you own,
Erroneous tenets have been ſown;
Not only each diſtinct dominion,
Has its eſtabliſhed opinion,
But there you'll find a thouſand more,
Like maggots breeding in a ſore.
" Britannia annual crops has borne,
Of doctrines, copious as her corn;
One ſingle grain of faith produces
A bath of doctrines and of uſes;
And you, with greater eaſe, may poll
The people, than their whims enroll.
For moſt religious Sectaries,
Are ſubject to their fall and riſe;
And ſhould, like mortuaries, fill,
With my conſent, a weekly bill.
" Now, as in this Pantheon Iſle,
Religions ſwarm, both good and vile;
Of which ſome confidently draw
Their origin from Moſes' law;

Whilſt others quote the goſpel page;
Others again rely on age;
Whilſt ſome of innovation boaſt,
Yet all lay claim to th' Holy Ghoſt.
The man who carefully elects
The beſt from all theſe diff'rent ſects,
Muſt into all their doctrines pry,
A Sceptic live, and Atheiſt die."
To this Piſtiſeros replies,
" You're laviſh of your drolleries.
I own Chriſtianity corrupted,
But let me not be interrupted.
A ſubject of ſuch weight and moment,
Demands a ſerious ear and comment.
I ſhan't ſupport didactic rule,
Nor act Preceptor in a ſchool;
But the attention which I want,
I readily, in turn, ſhall grant.
If ſneers and ridicule parade,
And 'ſtead of evidence perſuade;
Or men apply to heat and paſſion,
To forward their argumentation;
Not reaſon then, but higheſt mettle,
Stands faireſt the debate to ſettle.
As Truth, like pearls, is beſt deſcry'd,
When Thetis ſmooths the rugged tide;

Unleſs alternate ſilence reigns,
Abortion muſt attend our pains.
" If Error, when it's fairly trac'd,
And prov'd as ſuch, is ſtill embrac'd;
Prudence directs us to renounce,
And quit the argument at once;
For we ſhall only diſcompoſe
Ourſelves, and nothing bring t' a cloſe.
Let prepoſſeſſion quit the field,
And paſſion unto reaſon yield;
When rage the human breaſt infects,
It circumſcribes the intellects;
But thoſe who're ſway'd by moderation,
Are always quick in penetration.
Then let's be calm, and not entangle,
The argument with quirks and wrangle;
And having ſpoke, let you and I,
Receive with patience a reply."
Says Antigerſis, " I allow,
When reaſon does to paſſion bow,
And when, by ſenſual illuſion,
The mental powers are in confuſion;
A man in duel, or debate,
Is in a weak and deſp'rate ſtate;
Being ſkill'd in bluſter and parade,
Better than in the tongue or blade.

What you propoſe is excellent,
To which I readily aſſent;
Vigour does well, but paſſion ſuits
But ill in managing diſputes;
Though hot the ſervice, I confeſs,
The cooleſt thought inſures ſucceſs.
I ſay once more, I'm ſatisfy'd,
And if ſucceſs falls on my ſide,
And Revelation does give place
To Reaſon, you ſhall have releaſe;
But that, on your parole of honour,
You'll ceaſe more eulogies upon her.
And ſince your faith muſt pay your ranſom,
I ſhall, on my part, act as handſome;
And promiſe, if you reaſon ſtronger,
To be an Infidel no longer.
For never I opinion wed,
As huſbands take their wives to bed;
That is, for better or for worſe,
But ſtill ſubmit to Reaſon's force;
And as I would not chuſe to marry
A whore, becauſe ſhe's briſk and airy,
So neither would I chuſe to meaſure,
Opinions by their giving pleaſure;
But notions of deliberation,
I quit, on better information.

" Thoſe

" Thoſe are but ſmatterers in ſcience,
Who on firſt notions place reliance;
Of which they're fond as Don Quevedo
Was of his baſket-hilt and ſpado.
Beſt thoughts they fancy at the brim,
Like cream in dairy ciſtern, ſwim;
And what is the ſure conſequence,
Of this implicit indolence?
Why, to be bound in folly's fetters,
Not to be loos'd by time or letters.
And as I rate my liberty,
Of acting, as of thinking, high;
I would no more enſlave my mind,
Than perſon into thraldom bind.
If, therefore, you my doubts expell,
To Libertines I'll bid farewell."
Piſtiſeros to this replies,
" I'm pleas'd with your civilities;
A clement ſoul in the victorious,
Than cruel, is by far more glorious;
The conquer'd, like a whining lover,
To ſupplication being bound over,
Muſt be content with thoſe conditions,
The conqu'ror grants to his petitions;
Therefore, if conquer'd, I'll rely
Upon your generoſity.

" Now

" Now let us take a retroſpection;
You ſay you doubt a Reſurrection;
Of the ſame body, I ſuppoſe,
Which did on earth the ſoul incloſe;
Becauſe the ſoul nor falls nor dies,
And can't of conſequence ariſe.

" No Chriſtian doctrine, I confeſs,
As this, hath met ſuch poor ſucceſs;
Nor borne more flouts and ridicules,
From ancient and from modern ſchools.
St. Paul, by Feſtus, was reproach'd
As mad, when he the doctrine broach'd;
Though to ſupport it none was abler,
Yet the Athenians call'd him babler.
Such wits as theſe could not conceive,
How bodies, moulder'd in the grave,
And every atom diſſipated,
Could poſſibly be reinſtated.

" Reaſon improv'd informs that mind,
Which when abus'd it ſerves to blind;
If uncontrouling in beheſts,
We then obey what ſhe ſuggeſts;
On ſuch occaſions ſhe's the whole,
And ſov'reign ruler of the ſoul.
But if in conduct we are check'd
We treat her then with diſreſpect.

If Truth on her reſearches beams,
And Heaven diſplays, or Hell, — ſhe dreams;
Or nurſes up a ſpurious baſtard,
Of melancholy whims, and daſtard.
If ſhe admits redintegration
Beyond the grave, — 'tis education:
In ſhort, if we muſt be dependent
On the Creator, — there's an end on't.

" In ancient times, which modern pride,
As days of ignorance deride;
The Rich, the Learned, and the Brave,
The Poor, Illit'rate, and the Slave,
The Free, the Coward, and the Clown,
And all, from Cottage to the Crown,
Could, by the intellectual eye,
A wiſe and powerful God deſcry;
Then was an Infidel profeſs'd,
Like Faithful now, a ſtanding jeſt.

" But we, who on their knowledge build,
Will not to their opinions yield;
The reaſon of ſome thouſand years,
By thoſe improv'd, as ours on theirs,
Muſt now, by all progreſſive laws,
Be ſkill'd in each myſterious cauſe.

" Thus prepoſſeſs'd, the doughty 'Squire,
Does into Nature's laws enquire;

And from ſophiſtic ſcraps and lines,
The ways and works of God defines;
But ſtill determin'd to retract,
Each myſtic quality and act,
Which does oppoſe his half-fledg'd reaſon,
Or proves too bright for him to gaze on.
And ſo a well convinc'd Carteſian,
Without reſerve, or heſitation,
Can ſatisfy a doubting Paul,
And prove the dead riſe not at all,
Becauſe he knows of no connection,
Between Life, Death, and Reſurrection;
For what phœnomena of nature
Give moulder'd corpſe its priſtine ſtature?
Why if a plant by nature dies
In winter, and in ſpring doth riſe,
And in the ſummer doth aſſume,
Its priſtine elegance and bloom;
May not the God of Nature do
The ſame by human bodies too?
" Time is the world's dilapidator,
Whilſt Nature acts as *Pia Mater*;
And, by prolific power, renews
What time doth ruin and abuſe;
And if we had the ſkill to view,
Her laws and operations through,

If the plant dies it does not rise in Spring —

I make

I make no doubt, a Reſurrection
Would there appear in cloſe connection;
And this becauſe by art we trace,
Some hints congenial to the caſe.

" Thus, by experience, it is found,
A bar of ſteel to atoms ground,
However long thoſe atoms lay,
Incorp'rated in lump of clay,
Will, by a loadſtone, quit ſuch cake,
And inſtantly their cells forſake,
And with a fix'd obedience own,
Th' attractive virtue of the ſtone;
Nor can a particle eſcape,
But all unite in duſty heap.

" You'll ſay, perhaps, this magnet's force,
Is nature, taking its own courſe.
This I allow; but it implies
Nature may have ſuch qualities
As are ſecreted from the ken
Of wiſe and penetrating men.

" If, therefore, Nature be not God,
(A thought ridiculous, and odd,)
But ſprung from a creative Sov'reign,
That power muſt have a right to govern,
And regulate her actions ſtill,
To bring about his ſacred will.

" But

" But Art with Nature doth unite,
To give this Chriſtian doctrine light;
For adepts in the chemic trade,
A reſurrection oft have made;
And many inſtances afford,
Of macerated forms reſtor'd.

" They take a flower, or plant—ſuppoſe
It is a flower—and that a roſe.
The root, the ſtalk, and leaves confounded
Together—in a mortar pounded;
A ſalt, or ſpirit, from this maſs
Extracted, and put in a glaſs;
Then by the ſoft and gentle power
Of fire, th' reſuſcitated flower,
Will, to the artiſt's great ſurprize,
Gradatim, from the ſalts ariſe;
Appear in proper form and hue,
As when upon the ground it grew;
And will again (remove the fire)
To its chaotic ſalts retire.

" Thus Art and Nature both create
Examples of a future ſtate.
And he who doubts the thing, maintains
That God ſubordinately reigns;
And to thoſe mimic ſons of art,
His power celeſtial doth impart.

" To

" To us the taſk would be ſevere,
If not impoſſible to clear;
The clay of ev'ry ſcatter'd mite,
Of powder'd ſteel, too ſmall for ſight;
Much leſs, I'm ſure, can finite mind,
The particles of matter find,
Which chance, throughout the univerſe,
Or art, endeavour'd to diſperſe;
But to Omniſcience this muſt be,
Order, and regularity.
He can, no doubt, whene'er he pleaſe,
With that facility and eaſe,
With which at firſt he did create 'em,
From their ſecreted cells tranſlate 'em;
Or may, if ſo diſpos'd, impreſs
A nat'ral force and readineſs
On thoſe divided parts, to move,
By power of homogeneous love;
As earthly juices, fit to nouriſh
A plant, commix to make it flouriſh."
Says Antigerſis, " I ſhall grant,
The Deity no power can want;
Be circumſcrib'd by no reſtrictions,
Except in working contradictions;
By which I mean he can't create
A body crooked too, and ſtraight;

Aged

Aged, and in its youthful prime,
Dwarfiſh, and tall at the ſame time.
If, therefore, as you ſay, the ſame
Soul does inſpire th' identic frame,
From which it took reluctant leave,
'Twill not be eaſy to conceive,
How young and old alike can be
For ever bleſt with harmony;
How comely and deform'd can find,
In the ſame manſions, peace of mind.
" To tell a man that God is able,
By dint of power irrefragable,
To force each atom to return,
From its receptacle the urn,
And occupy that very ſtation,
It had before a ſeparation;
So that the riſen form might be,
The ſame in parts and ſymmetry,
As that which putrefaction bore,
Perhaps ten thouſand years before:
To this, if he's of faith implicit,
You need not his aſſent ſollicit;
His faith will ſilence every doubt,
And make with eaſe the myſtery out.
" But reas'ning thus won't influence
The notions of a man of ſenſe;

A Person
may believe
all this and
more without
any part of it
being true

Who never likes to have his queſtions
Reſolv'd by doubts, and mere ſuggeſtions.
" Beſides, Omnipotence would be,
For ev'ry whim an ample plea;
By this the Mufti will be able,
To canonize Mahomet's fable;
And paſſing through this ſanctuary,
No Popiſh legend can miſcarry;
For where's th' abſurdity they teach,
That's out of the celeſtial reach?
" It muſt be weak, whatever men ſay,
Oppos'd to God's omnipotency;
So if that Prieſt, or Potentate,
Who firſt diſclos'd a middle ſtate,
Where ſouls 'twixt Heaven and Hell reſide,
And from their filth are purify'd,
Had fix'd the ſame e'en in the ſun,
It had ſucceeded, ten to one:
Becauſe that orb, for what man knows,
With ſtreams of burning ſulphur glows;
And Hell being, in imagination,
A ſubterraneous ſituation,
Veſuvius will extremely well,
Or Ætna, make a local Hell;
All which may be ſupported ſtill,
By the Almighty power and will.

" But

" But power is not the point in queſtion,
Becauſe unfit for a conteſt on;
It is not what God can effect,
But what we've reaſon to expect;
For though ſome Sages have conceited,
The univerſe as uncreated;
Yet many more, and thoſe the prime,
Have thought all things were made in time.
Then ſure that pow'r which did create 'em,
Without a pre-exiſting atom,
That will'd them into order, can
Rebuild his ruinated plan.
The power's confeſs'd, but if exerted
To raiſe mankind, as you've aſſerted,
It muſt deſtroy that holineſs,
Which Saints in Paradiſe poſſeſs.
" T' illuſtrate this, let us ſuppoſe,
A head without an ear, or noſe;
A body maim'd of hand, or foot,
And hump upon the back to boot;
A ſoul thus clad can ne'er be bleſs'd,
Where others are completely dreſs'd.
" Triumphant reaching the ſea ſide,
'Tis ſaid great Alexander cried,
Becauſe from thence he did conclude,
No worlds were left to be ſubdu'd;

But if you're right, he now muſt cry,
For carrying his head awry.
" But hark—my notion of addition,
Is to encreaſe the firſt condition;
The word ſubſtraction too is us'd,
To repreſent a thing reduc'd;
And where ſuch accidents appear,
Identity cannot be there;
Unleſs poetic ſhifts you'll go to,
And ſay that *pars* will ſtand *pro toto*.
In ſhort, 'tis worthy of the wiſe,
To ſhow what bodies ſhall ariſe."
" What you object, Piſtiſeros ſays,
Is not peculiar to our days;
For Wits of ev'ry age have tried,
To ſet this grating thought aſide;
And as the ſcene of action lies,
In worlds remote from mortal eyes;
Th' aſſertor alſo bound to prove it;
A bare negation will remove it.
For how can that be demonſtrated,
Which as the joys of Heaven are rated?
And is, as Scripture makes appear,
Impervious both to eye or ear;
Outreaches all that human art,
To mens conceptions can impart.

No wonder, then, this doubtful cauſe,
Affords the Infidel applauſe;
Who being inquiſitive and nice,
Says, ‘ Shew the Father—’Twill ſuffice.’
No leſs would ſatisfy a Jew,
That Chriſt was God, but ſuch a view.
" Reaſon, by our indulgence, grows,
Like children, crabbed and moroſe;
Or as the Devil is repreſented,
Only good humour'd when contented.
So when the Scriptures recommend
What reaſon cannot comprehend,
They're falſe, we cry — for ſure from Heav'n,
Such ſenſeleſs doctrines ne'er were giv'n.
But pray ſhould reaſon that decry,
Which, 'tis ſuppos'd, it cannot try?
Shall we call that ridiculous,
Which we've no power to diſcuſs?
Or if th' imagination ſtrikes,
On an objection which it likes,
Againſt ſome part of Holy Writ,
Happy's the man that on it hit;
'Tis inſtantly allow'd as valid,
And th' oppoſition fairly rally'd.
For though the Scripture comes in court,
As evidence for its ſupport,

Yet it's condemn'd as an impoſture,
And Revelation too, as foſter.
And that becauſe the convicts dare,
'Gainſt her authority declare.
" Say, then, what proof will be ſufficient,
To pleaſe a perſon thus condition'd?
For if an ancient Father's quoted,
'Tis inſtantly reply'd,—He doated.
If modern ſentiments we rigg out,
The Author's ſtigmatis'd—a Bigot;
If to evince it Scripture's call'd,
Scripture's unmercifully maul'd.
" The Ancient Fathers, I muſt own,
And modern too, to error prone;
And Milton, Newton, Locke, and Boyle,
Labour'd at this with fruitleſs toil;
For all their argumental lectures,
Were built entirely on conjectures.
If reaſon, therefore, ſo refin'd,
In this was ignorant and blind;
If no terreſtrial knowledge can
Illuminate the mind of man;
We muſt to Revelation fly,
T' inveſtigate this myſtery;
For nothing but the ſacred Code,
Can clearly ſhew this doctrine's mode."

" If ſettled there, ſays Antigerſis,
Point out the chapter and the verſes;
And I will aſk no better ſurety,
If not entangled with obſcurity.
For though 'tis faſhionable wit,
To ridicule the Sacred Writ,
As man bewilder'd was without it,
I never ſuch aſſiſtance doubted;
But thought 'twas arrogance muſt lead
Blind man to ſlight celeſtial aid."
" Piſtiſeros ſays, the world ſuppoſes
The book of Job was wrote by Moſes;
And this preliminary granted,
No further evidence is wanted.
If you the nineteenth chapter read,
You'll be from heſitation freed;
For there identity, I take it,
Is evident as words can make it."
Says Antigerſis, " The Socinian,
And Baptiſt, ſwerve from this opinion;
And other Sect'ries have agreed,
T' expell this doctrine from their creed;
And that becauſe they won't admit,
This book of Job by Moſes writ;
But will maintain this proof ſo able,
To be an allegoric fable.

Therefore, unleſs you can believe,
Thoſe heterodox will all deceive;
Humility would deem they might
Have equal chance to be in th' right.
" In ſhort, I've got the texts by rote,
From firſt to laſt, which you muſt quote,
To prove the body's reſurrection,
Nor is there one without objection;
And has receiv'd ſufficient anſwer,
From orthodox, and learned man, Sir.
For Ortho' both, and Het'rodoxy,
Alternate ſtand each other's proxy;
They differ not except in letter,
And neither is the other's better;
So we muſt know by whom apply'd,
Before we this or that decide."
To this Piſtiſeros replies,
" 'Tis prejudice alone denies;
The learn'd of ev'ry ſect divided,
In this, yet all are Scripture guided.
But when a doctrine is aſſerted,
And by the learned controverted;
That ſide bids faireſt to be ſound,
Which does no heav'nly virtue wound.
And as the body does unite,
To ſerve the ſoul in wrong and right,

It ſhould, in juſtice, ſhare the woe,
Or weal, the ſoul muſt undergo."
Says Antigerſis, "This implies,
There muſt be two identities;
That is, the ſoul, and its machine,
To make us be what we have been.
Yet metaphyſics have confin'd
Identity unto the mind;
For as the ſcabbard to the ſword,
Does no identity afford,
Which ſtill will be the ſame ſword, whether
The ſheath is made of wood or leather;
The ſoul, juſt ſo, will be the ſame,
Whate'er the ſubſtance, or the frame,
Which th' Almighty ſhall beſtow,
To cloath it in, for bliſs, or woe.
Will the ſame perſon ſtand confeſt,
As if in former body dreſt.
Nor will this wound the attribute
Of Juſtice, more than when a brute,
As an atonement muſt ſurrender
Its life, inſtead of the offender."
Piſtiſeros ſays, "I ſee your ſcheme
Is a Pythagorean dream;
For that Philoſopher maintain'd,
That ſouls in other bodies reign'd;

And muſt it be a ſtretch of faith,
To own what Revelation ſaith?
As if Omnipotency could,
With greater difficulty mould
The former bodies, than to make
New bodies for the ſouls to take.
" Yet, after all, I don't allow,
The bodies ſhall be then, as now;
For if 'twas young, a dwarf, or crooked,
When the reluctant ſoul forſook it,
Thoſe blemiſhes, by Scripture ſtory,
Will all be ſwallow'd up in glory;
For that which naturally dies,
St. Paul declares will ſpiritual riſe.
Therefore, inſtead of ſpeculation,
If you will ſtudy Revelation,
Both you and I ſhall be agreed,
In this myſterious point of creed."
" In this we are agreed, I own,
That the identity is flown,
Says Antigerſis; for the lame
Being rais'd complete, is not the ſame.
" But now I'd willingly expell
That vulgar faith of local Hell;
With its eternity of pain,
The Devil, and Imps that in it reign;

Becauſe thoſe whims are built upon
The Heathen tales of Acheron."
" To-morrow, if you will agree,
Piſtiſeros ſays, to dine with me,
The articles which now you've ſtarted,
Shall be diſcuſs'd before we're parted;
At three you'll meet your frugal fare."
— Says Antigerſis, " I'll be there."

The ARGUMENT *of the* SEVENTEENTH CANTO.

'Gainſt Sacred Writ a looſe Objection;
The Doctrine canvaſs'd of Election;
With ſome conjectural Opinions,
Whence Satan roſe; where his Dominions.

CANTO XVII.

NO ſooner was the dinner ended,
But Antigerſis, as intended,
Without preamble or excuſe,
Did thus the ſubject introduce.
" I cannot with that doctrine cloſe,
Which doth an Imp of Hell ſuppoſe;
I mean a ſly malignant power,
Still ſeeking whom he may devour;
And hath o'er man triumphant reign'd,
Unaw'd by God, and unreſtrain'd.
For as by Celſus we are taught
To reaſon, 'tis an impious thought,
T' aſſert a helliſh adverſary
Can make God's purpoſes miſcarry;

That

That he, whoſe view muſt be the good
Of man, in this ſhould be withſtood,
And in the ſtruggle come off lame,
As Jacob with the Angel came.
" Such tales are indigeſted fictions,
To reaſon glaring contradictions;
For where's the power, let thinking men ſay,
Can grapple with Omnipotency?
The Devil at head of all the legions,
Of thoſe imaginary regions,
Oppos'd to the Almighty pow'r,
Would be moſt certainly no more,
Than if whole ſwarms of flies in th' air,
With Xerxes army might compare.
" This doctrine is a renovation,
Of Heatheniſh infatuation;
And if antiquity's a ſign,
That any doctrine is divine;
Not one in all the ſacred pages
More holy, or of half its age is.
" The ancient God of Hell, call'd Pluto,
Is the identical cornuto,
With barbed tail, and cloven foot,
Great eyes, and hide as black as ſoot;
And is the Scripture Satan, who
Does ſtill mankind with rage purſue;

And ev'ry Imp which now we dream on,
Was formerly a Cacodæmon."
To this replies Piſtiſeros,
" I muſt confeſs I'm at a loſs,
To find if you would overthrow
The doctrine of eternal woe;
For ſome opinions have confin'd,
Thoſe torments only to the mind.
That you ſhould ſtudiouſly preſcind
From Faith, this doctrine of a Fiend;
Or yet a local Hell deny,
I ſee no cogent reaſon why.
For ſince mankind are fallen, 'twere ſtrange elſe,
If there had been no fallen Angels;
Becauſe whatever is created,
To imperfection is related.
" Beſides, the Scriptures plainly tell us,
That Angels once had been rebellious;
And were for this apoſtate mind,
To realms of endleſs woe confin'd;
Yet if they're not reſtrain'd in will,
Why may they not abuſe it ſtill;
And turn their baffled efforts where
They need not of ſucceſs deſpair?
Their overthrow who were ambitious,
Renders them ſpiteful and malicious;

And makes them conſtantly endeavour,
To ruin thoſe who are in favour.
And as th' Almighty is inclin'd,
To give that bliſs to human kind,
From which thoſe Angels have been drove,
'Tis not ſurprizing if they ſtrove,
By their malicious circumvention,
To fruſtrate this divine intention.
" Free-thinkers, as ſome take delight,
To treat the Sacred Writ with ſlight,
Inſiſt thoſe records do contain,
Tranſactions marvelous and vain;
That they are full of inſtitutions,
Diſcordant with wiſe reſolutions;
To ſov'reign goodneſs quite unſuited,
And therefore to be much diſputed.
" When Wits arraign the Sacred Word,
With doctrines trifling and abſurd,
There's no removing the objection,
Without a ſtudious retroſpection,
In the whole proof and evidence,
Brought from Chriſtianity's defence.
But ſuch is the unhappy caſe,
Th' objection ſtares us in the face;
Is comprehended at firſt mention,
By ſlender parts and ſmall attention;

Whereas

Whereas without examination,
Some learning, and cloſe application,
This evidence can't well be weigh'd,
Nor a true judgment of it made.
Who ever therefore entertains
Th' objection, and will take no pains,
Through ſullen, or illit'rate pride,
To weigh the proofs on t'other ſide;
Of conſequence muſt fortify,
Himſelf in Incredulity.

" From hence ſuch great diſtaſte and rage,
Prevail againſt the ſacred page;
The idle and luxurious fop,
Who reap'd at ſchool a ſlender crop,
Nor much improv'd by after reading,
Would fain be thought a man of breeding;
And having made a few collections,
Of ſmart, and common-place objections;
To which he no ſolution ſought,
'Cauſe it demanded too much thought;
He dubs himſelf from hence a wit,
To ridicule religion fit;
And looks contemptuous on believers,
As rank enthuſiaſts, or deceivers.

" When man the Chriſtian doctrines meaſures,
By their agreement to his pleaſures;

That

That ordinance, or inſtitution,
Not follow'd by a plain ſolution,
Becomes freſh matter of contempt,
And from his creed muſt be exempt.
" 'Tis from this caſt of indolence,
That Satan gives you ſuch offence;
For you ſuppoſe the Scripture teaches,
This Prince of Darkneſs over-reaches
The Being Supreme, and that he can,
Uncurb'd, ſeduce his fav'rite, man;
That, conſequently, Chriſtians own
Th' Almighty rivall'd in his throne.
" But ſuch a vile and impious notion,
Could not conſiſt with true devotion;
A ſlender ſhare of meditation
Muſt think the ſentence of damnation,
Subdues the ſufferers below,
That power which plung'd them into woe.
But then the Chriſtian church allows,
Man's power unto the Devil bows,
And muſt eternally give place,
Unaided by celeſtial grace;
Which grace, the holy Scripture ſaith,
Is giv'n to thoſe who aſk in faith."
" I don't, ſays Antigerſis, glory,
To throw contempt upon this ſtory;

The mob of ev'ry realm require,
Such doctrines as eternal fire,
Nor could that tool of ſtate, a Prieſt,
Without this gainful ſcheme ſubſiſt.
Therefore I think there is no hurt in
Keeping the Dev'l behind the curtain,
When 'tis deſign'd as a defence,
Againſt a mob-impertinence.
—But when a vulgar notion plumes
On its reception, and aſſumes
A ſolemn and religious guiſe,
And would impoſe upon the wiſe,
Thoſe who eſteem religion's honour,
Should ſuffer no ſuch cheat upon her.
" The ſacred Writ maintains, I know,
A Dev'l;—perhaps it may be ſo;
But let me aſk, where is the uſe,
To ſay that God has ſet him looſe,
And giv'n him will and pow'r to fly on
Weak mortals, like a roaring lion;
And artfully t' entrap a creature,
Unequal to his crafty nature?
" 'Tis ſaid that we have vice inherent,
And paſſions too, from our firſt parent;
Theſe are external pomp and riches,
And pleaſure too, which ſo bewitches

The yielding maſs of fleſh and blood,
'Tis with reluctance they're withſtood.
Why need we then a group of Devils,
To drive us into further evils?
Why ſuch a crafty hoſt of rangers,
To draw the Sons of God in dangers?
And plunge th' unguarded into ruin,
Which, without grace, there's no eſchewing?
" If this be true, then you muſt own,
The righteous muſt be thinly ſown;
So thin, that, in the Poet's ſtile,
Thebes has more gates, more mouths the Nile.
And as you have the matter ſtated,
We're all to Hell predeſtinated,
Except a few, whom conqu'ring grace,
Redeems from that infernal place.
" If what Malbranche avers be right,
When man receives increaſe of light,
It ſprings from books, or converſation,
And not divine illumination;
For the Creator and the creature,
Being bound by gen'ral laws of nature,
God here on earth his end fulfills,
By gen'ral, not partic'lar wills.
As when a cannon is diſcharg'd,
And global ore from pris'n enlarg'd,

The whizzing death at random flies,
Through thickeſt of the enemies;
No curve, or oblique courſe it runs,
Nor quality, nor virtue ſhuns;
But executes its firſt commiſſion,
Unſway'd by rank, or diſpoſition.
He, therefore, who to God aſſigns
Peculiar reaſons and deſigns,
Muſt think that God, by pre-election,
Works miracles for man's protection.
" This notion of a helliſh rout,
Tempting the wicked and devout,
Has been maintain'd by learned Sages,
Both of the paſt and preſent ages;
And if th' authority of letters
Would do, none boaſts more learn'd abettors.
Origen, Calvin, Zanchius, Beza,
Fathers of old; and, in our days, a
Multitude of zealous paſtors,
Subject their flock to theſe diſaſters.
But Zeal with Reaſon ſeldom lives,
One takes from God what t'other gives;
Thoſe Doctors reprobation pin,
On man's inevitable ſin;
This as the means—then they pretend,
God's ſov'reign glory is the end.

And

And thus by this ill-manag'd ſtory,
God's mercy ſuffers for his glory.
I know the Scriptures ſtill are quoted
By thoſe who for this doctrine voted;
But 'tis not what thoſe Doctors ſee,
Being fallible like you or me;
But what is in the Scripture found,
Where texts do not each other wound;
Scripture being mercifully fitted,
Both to the wiſe and the half-witted,
Defects of judgment ſtill ſupplies,
By help of anthropologies.
Thus God has got an equipage,
With mortal paſſions, joy and rage;
Has other motions of the mind,
And works by ways of human kind.
And thus, when the Apoſtle paints
The ſanctification of the Saints,
And ſays, that God predeſtinates;
So ſpeaking, he accommodates
The mode and tenor of his phraſe
As beſt adapted to our ways.
For this is true—What's paſt or future,
Reſpecting man—ſtill God is neuter:
All things to him alike muſt be,
Preſent throughout eternity:

And ſo, though God no man elects,
Without juſt cauſe,—nor one rejects;
Yet always knowing how we ſpend
Our life—He always ſees our end;
If Heaven or Hell's to be our ſtation;
—This is St. Paul's predeſtination.
Whoever therefore would convey a
Conformable and juſt idea
Of God, explain'd from ſacred texts,
With diligence and care corrects
Thoſe ſenſual paſſages, and groſs,
Which mercy, truth, and juſtice croſs.
The Scripture, if not thus perus'd,
Muſt be intricate and confus'd.
" And now a plain and obvious caſe,
This whim in its true light will place.
Suppoſe a Royal Edict, then,
To raiſe a regiment of men;
Which done, 'tis eaſy underſtood,
It comprehends both bad and good.
This corps, by the ſame order drawn,
That rais'd them firſt, upon a lawn,
Unarm'd, encircled in a fence,
So high, there's no eſcaping thence:
A proclamation firſt does warn,
That their condition is forlorn;

And if they were not on their guard,
They'd all be taken unprepar'd;
Then hungry lions, tigers, bears,
In herds are ſet about their ears.
—If one eſcapes with life, I dare ſay,
He'll not attribute it to mercy;
Nor can the nobleſt pomp of ſtile,
This act with juſtice reconcile.
" Therefore unleſs you'll contradict,
What common reaſon does evict;
That what is juſt in man, the ſame,
Is likewiſe juſt in the Supreme;
This doctrine of the Devil muſt,
Arraign th' Almighty as unjuſt."
" Your ſimile is ſtrong, I own,
Piſtiſeros ſays, but then you've flown,
From the firſt point, and with it blended,
A doctrine not to be defended.
For pr'ythee, tell me what relation
There is between predeſtination,
And the reality of Hell,
With Devils, recorded there to dwell?
" If you would find out my perſuaſion,
And broach the point on that occaſion;
I muſt confeſs I do not ſee,
How that and mercy can agree;

Or how St. Paul, with any face,
Could order men to pray for grace.
" If God's decrees be irreſpective,
Glory is not by man elective;
If Chriſt aton'd but for a few,
Obedience can't from all be due;
If the Elected cannot fall,
And Reprobates ne'er ſtood at all;
All exhortations, then, to bridle
Our luſts, muſt fruitleſs be and idle.
" In ſhort, the doctrine I ſurrender,
To reaſon as a groſs offender;
And alſo to the Chriſtian ſcheme,
A hurtful, miſchief-making theme.
" But who infernal pains diſcards,
Deſtroys the ſanction of rewards;
Of juſtice alſo dams the ſtream,
And vengeance tears from the Supreme,
As man will not be kept in awe,
By virtue's reverential law;
The motive then of greater force,
To regulate an evil courſe,
That moſt the wicked terrifies,
Does from the flames of Hell ariſe;
Then all attempts to rid the mind,
Of ſuch a check, muſt hurt mankind.

" If,

" If, as you would inſinuate,
This doctrine is a trick of ſtate;
'Tis ſtrange a monſter, brought to light
By policy, ſhould Stateſmen fright;
For Stateſmen are no more ſecure
From dread of this, than I, or you are;
(For draw what arguments you will,
Doubt riſes in the boſom ſtill;)
And this *Imperii Arcanum*,
Diſturbs e'en Princes' pericranium.

" A Bedlamite may hug an error,
Attended with ſuſpenſe and terror;
With ſuperſtitious fears ſit quaking,
And combat Devils of his own making.
But that the nobleſt of mankind,
With all th' advantages of mind,
Should conjure up a phantom, which
Did ride them, as the Devil a Witch;
And could get rid of it no more,
Than Cain of conſcience heretofore;
—Is ſo abſurd—the ſuppoſition
Requires the help of a Phyſician;
For phyſic more than reaſon can,
To ſanity reduce the man.

" But Hobbs, the Mathematic Statiſt,
Of modern Infidels the greateſt;

Has

Has giv'n your ſyſtem a new light,
Or, rather, overturn'd it quite.
" He ſays, no Prince would e'er advance,
What does rebellion countenance;
What wreſts the ſcepter too from Kings,
And of their pow'r does clip the wings.
For he, with confidence, maintains,
That no terreſtrial Sov'reign reigns;
Secure of fealty and of love,
Who conſtitutes a pow'r above;
Whoſe arm vindictive can impoſe,
A pain excelling temp'ral woes:
Becauſe that power, with the opinion,
That even Kings hold their dominion
From a Supreme, in whom they muſt
Place all their confidence and truſt,
Has oft, by impious knaves, been made,
A proper motive to invade
A Prince, when any new injunction
Fills reſtleſs zealots with compunction.
" You ſee, then, how this Patriarch Hobbs,
His pupils of their notion robs;
The ſubject he contrives to blame,
Not Prince, from this fanatic ſcheme.
" In ſhort, no Prince, or Stateſman cou'd,
Upon the bulk of men obtrude,

An argument, drawn from the dead,
With horror pregnant, and with dread;
Which checks the lewd, the haughty curbs,
And ſenſual in his freaks diſturbs,
Without a ſtrenuous oppoſition,
To ſuch a galling propoſition.
Nor would a modern man of ſenſe
Admit this doctrine, at expence
Of that tranquillity and quiet
Which muſt deſert him after riot;
Unleſs, on cloſe examination,
He found no room for a negation.
" But I am more inclin'd t' admit,
You mean to imitate the wit,
That now with fools is moſt in faſhion,
Of ridiculing Revelation.
—A wretched effort, to ſupply
The want of ſenſe and decency;
Muſt therefore of that worth bereave you,
Which birth and education gave you.
" But now, ſuppoſing you are jocal,
— A Hell you own,—but is it local?
If local, then you fain would know,
If fix'd above us, or below?
" This queſtion muſt a prieſt provoke,
And makes a very dainty joke;

A ſen-

A ſentiment ſo quaint and queer,
Supports a conſequential ſneer;
It pens the parſon in a nook,
—Was I the man, I'd ſay—go look.
" But what if he, to ſhun the hiſs,
Should vent a ſtrange hypotheſis,
And ſay 'tis fix'd—the Lord knows where,
But in the regions of the air;
Some blazing comet, undeſcry'd,
From earth,—you'll ſay, perhaps, he ly'd;
Becauſe nor faith, nor teleſcope,
Aſſiſted Newton, or the Pope,
By corp'ral, or by ſpir'tual eye,
This ſame infernal ſtar to ſpy.
" What then, a fam'd prelatic ſage,†
The Dædalus of this our age,
As once unto the moon he wanders,
Aſſiſted by a brace of ganders;
In this his voyage by chance did ſpy land,
As fam'd Columb did Cuba's iſland.
It bore due weſt, in ſeamens ſtile,
Diſtant about ten thouſand mile;
He could not ſafe approach it nigher,
Becauſe it was a maſs of fire;
Kept, therefore, at that diſtance coaſting,
But landed not, for fear of roaſting.

† Bp Berkeley

The

The diſtance was by computation,
For he could take no obſervation,
The ſun being dark'ned, as he ſaid,
By clouds of ſmoke the comet made;
The latitude he could not tell,
But did ſuppoſe it muſt be Hell;
Yet nam'd it, aping Don Diego,
Aërial Terra del Fuego.
—Say, parſon,—are you well perſuaded,
This prelate plann'd the voyage, and made it?
—I think it can be prov'd as well,
As you can prove there is no Hell.
" But now your quære ſhall be canvaſs'd,
Some for, and ſome againſt it ſtand faſt.
All thoſe who for a ſite declare,
Say (if it is not in the air,
Where wicked ſpirits may be chain'd,
And guilty ſouls, till they're arraign'd,)
The bowels of this earth muſt be
That dark and damn'd profundity;
Which a Franconian prieſt maintains,
A ball of liquid fire contains;
Which, chaos like, by laws not bound,
Is floating in confuſion round;
And bodies to the center tending,
The damn'd will ſink there without ending;

Which

Which certainly's an emblem fit,
Of an unfathomable pit.
But there's no pervious paſſage found,
As yet to this infernal pound;
Unleſs Veſuvius's ſulph'rous flames,
The entrance to this lake proclaims.
" But thoſe againſt the ſite do ſay,
Until the gen'ral Judgment-day,
There is no local or corporeal
Pains of Hell, or purgatorial.
For if the ſouls of good and bad,
Before that day remain unclad;
It is a ſoleciſm t'avouch,
They're ſubject to corporeal touch.
If wicked ſouls, then, puniſh'd are,
Before appearance at this bar,
The pains are mental, and ariſe,
From dread of this upright aſſize.
This is opinion, but we know,
Wherever Hell, whate'er it's woe,
If right deſcrib'd in Sacred Writ,
Or does a metaphor admit,
The torment will, when ſentence paſt,
Exceſſive be, and always laſt.
" For this the word of truth we have,
That truth which never can deceive.

And as a capital offender,
Who muſt to law his life ſurrender,
Muſt be diſtracted ſhould he ſpend
The time, 'twixt ſentence and his end,
In vain and trifling diſputation,
About the gibbet's ſituation:
So likewiſe frantic is the man,
Who ſpends his ſhort precarious ſpan,
In a ridiculous debate,
'Bout Hell, its torments, and its ſeat;
Which Heav'n deſign'd ſhould be employ'd,
Thoſe endleſs torments to avoid."
" Nothing, ſays Antigerſis, does,
So much a limping cauſe diſcloſe,
Or diſingenuous turn of thought,
As when a demonſtration's ſought,
From immaterial worlds to ſhew,
If doctrines ſpring from truth or no.
" It is recorded, that a Prelate,
Did once, in treatiſe learn'd, relate,
This world is in its form a ſphere,
Suſpended alſo in the air;
But on its axis ſwiftly turning,
Like fowl on ſpit, preſerv'd from burning:
And being inhabited all over,
A truth, unthought of, did diſcover;

+ a prelate Galileo?

That

That whilſt one half enjoy'd the light,
T'other was invelop'd by night;
Some breakfaſted with their heads up,
Whilſt others on their heads did ſup.
—A ſtrange quandary, that St. Auſtin,
And St. Lactantius, too, were loſt in;
'Twas alſo to the Holy See
Of Rome, a ſenſeleſs myſtery;
Which ſtrove to cruſh this revelation,
By th' author's excommunication.
" And therefore, if nor Saint, nor Pope,
By their unerring light could grope
Through this material ſyſtem, why
Should we preſumptuouſly deny,
Thoſe facts, the ſacred chart has ſpread,
About the regions of the dead?
" I muſt confeſs you've hit the truth,
The mode, and levity of youth;
With frequent lewd and flattering whiſpers,
To oft reluctant terrors diſperſe;
And 'gainſt conviction made me try,
T' excell in rant and blaſphemy.
" I ſee, Piſtiſeros, you ſmile,
To find me alter thus my ſtile;
From being ludicrouſly imperious,
To grow at once ſo grave and ſerious;

But

But this tranſition makes it clear,
I'm not in heart what I appear.
Indeed my Reaſon's early dawn,
Was in the paths of Virtue drawn;
My tongue ſcarce knew articulation,
When taught to liſp in ſupplication;
Nor was my infancy completed,
Before I knew for what created;
And all thoſe doctrines comprehended,
On which ſalvation moſt depended.
From thoſe I ne'er, till manhood, ſtray'd,
When an inſidious plot was laid,
By ſome aſſociates, who agreed
To ſhake my virtue, and my creed.
But then I never could be brought,
To entertain that impious thought,
That there can be no Power Supreme,
But God and Nature is the ſame.
However, they have ply'd ſo well,
That though I own a Heav'n and Hell,
(No matter where, or when, or how,
Thoſe points being immaterial now,)
It muſt be with this limitation,
The latter ceaſes in duration.
" If this opinion you'll unſettle,
'Twill Infidels throw off their mettle.

For though they'd fain be underſtood,
The ſecret joy of doing good,
And to avoid th' diſſatisfaction
Of evil, is their rule of action,
Yet 'tis the flatt'ring hopes there ſhall
Be a ſhort Hell, or none at all,
That gives to wicked actions ſpring,
And pulls out their inherent ſting."
To this Piſtiſeros replies,
" 'Tis an agreeable ſurprize,
To find the man, who, I ſuppos'd,
With Infidelity had clos'd,
His Chriſtian principles retaining,
And their beloved rules diſdaining.
" The ſun has left our hemiſphere,
And, if you pleaſe, we'll take the air;
Examine what my garden yields,
Or ramble in the neighb'ring fields;
And if you will return and ſup,
Where dropp'd, we'll take the ſubject up."
Says Antigerſis, " I'm agreed;
And, by your motion, ſhall proceed."

The ARGUMENT *of the* EIGHTEENTH CANTO.

Of human and divine Compaſſion;
Hell's Torments, Nature, and Duration.
The Equity of Puniſhment,
Prov'd in th' Exceſs, and not Extent.

CANTO XVIII.

SUPPER at nine being at an end,
When each had drank his king and friend,
Says Antigerſis, "I intreat,
That you will ſettle this debate;
For I muſt own, I cannot well
Admit an everlaſting Hell.
It ſprings from ſcripture miſapply'd,
And Reaſon's teſt will not abide,
Becauſe it can't with mercy ſuit,
Which is God's darling attribute.
"When fire eternal is expreſt,
The mind with horror is poſſeſt;
And though the Scripture, as we find,
Seems to the cruel ſide inclin'd,

Yet th' arguments for mercy plead,
That from the letter we recede;
For thus to do, we have a right,
When th' attributes are wounded by't.
Chriſtians their God muſt ſurely prize,
As juſt, compaſſionate, and wiſe,
To human nature not auſtere,
Neither vindictive nor ſevere:
And of the Chriſtian ſcheme, the Head,
Appointed Judge of quick and dead;
Who died for man upon the croſs,
Muſt be Philanthropotatos;
A friend to man, whoſe frail ſenſations,
Gave birth to his own deprecations;
When he in agony did pray,
His bitter cup might paſs away.
" The worſhip which Chriſt did ordain,
Forbids all cruelty and pain;
He ne'er enjoin'd to whip out ſin,
By wounds and ſtripes upon the ſkin:
Not Moloch like, whoſe flaming rod,
Denotes a fierce and merc'leſs God;
Who from th' afflicted boſom draws,
The babe to his inſatiate jaws;
But deems amendment and compunction,
For ſtings of ſin, the beſt of unction.

— Shall

— Shall ſuch a Judge, then—ſuch a Father,
Not moderate the ſentence rather?
Shall they not be more prone to ſpare,
Than puniſh worſe than we can bear?
Or ſhall a uſeleſs doom, and vain,
Heav'n's gracious diſpenſations ſtain?
For torments indeterminate,
To no good purpoſe can relate;
But is an irreſpective plan,
Which cannot ſerve, or God or Man.
For if in this forlorn condition,
Repentance merits not remiſſion;
Nor flame can meliorate the mind,
For what intention is't deſign'd?
" Vengeance, you'll ſay, purſues the creature;
Is God vindictive, then, in nature?
—His ſov'reign glory then muſt be,
Diſplay'd in this ſeverity.
Glory—For what?—To kill a fly!
An act unworthy you or I.
" Behold the law's ſevereſt ſtretch,
To puniſh an abandon'd wretch!
The culprit on a wheel extended,
And ſeemingly by none befriended;
The ſcreams that inſtantaneous flow,
From the firſt diſlocating blow,

Extracts from every ſtander by,
A ſoft and ſympathizing ſigh.
The blows redoubled, and the groan,
Succeeding every fractur'd bone,
Makes e'en the injur'd turn his friend,
And wiſh the next may be his end.
Not ſo—for blows ſucceed on blows,
'Till every breaſt compaſſion knows;
The ſully'd mirror of the eye,
Convulſive lip, and languid ſigh;
To pity turn obdurate ſmiles,
And Ketch of tender tears beguiles;
They make him with impatience watch,
The gracious ſignal for diſpatch.
" Shall man then piteous tears beſtow,
For temp'ral ſuff'rings here below,
And yet no length of ſuff'rings move
Compaſſion in the God of Love?
Conception baſe! With vengeance fraught,
May Heav'n prevent the impious thought.
No, let the pains of that dread place
Be ſharp, be long, but let them ceaſe.
" From hence it is that I diſpute
This doctrine, 'cauſe it bears no fruit;
And ſinners, as t' amendment, might
As well be annih'lated quite."

Piſtiſeros ſays, " What you've confeſt,
Points out your hopes ſhould be ſuppreſt;
For if a never-dying flame,
Cannot the reprobate reclaim,
Sure the preſumption there will be
An end of future miſery,
Muſt make the wicked treat with laughter
The torments threaten'd them hereafter;
Prompt them to riſque a ſlight purgation,
Rather than ſtint their inclination.
Therefore, though not from truth deſcended,
Eternal flames ſhould be defended;
Becauſe thoſe threats, in full extent,
Will fly, and heinous ſins prevent;
For dread of this does ever bring,
Each crime its own attendant ſting;
But free the wicked from this fear,
There's no reſtraint for his career.
" This point you think of Revelation,
Requires a mild interpretation;
For though the Sacred Writ in plain
And obvious language, does maintain,
In Hell the fire is never quench'd,
That faith, you think, ſhould be retrench'd;
And ſome leſs rigorous meaning found,
That Heav'n in mercy may abound;

For you ſuppoſe the lit'ral ſenſe,
Diminiſhes this excellence.

" You'll think it odd, but ſuch the caſe is,
That when abus'd, God's mercy ceaſes;
It governs in this world, and ends,
But never to the next extends:
For juſtice there alone preſides,
And th' Judge in his deciſions guides.
I know you'll ſay that Juſtice ought,
Adapt the mulct unto the fault;
And that eternal pain exceeds
The worſt of temporary deeds.
That is, (if you may be the Judge,)
To ſuffer you will not begrudge;
Could you your neighbour's bed defile,
You'd take from Job a ſwinging bile.
That pretty girl--Could you deceive her,
You'd bear one fit of hectic fever.
For bawdry, blaſphemy, and oath,
Your head or tooth ſhould ach—or both;
—But for one hour—for if decreed
For two—this would the crime exceed.
For twenty years of drunken frolic
You'd undergo a minute's cholic.
In ſhort, you'd be content to moan
A week, perhaps, with gout or ſtone;

For crimes of twenty years commiſſion,
And this, you think, a full condition.
But then to puniſh a poor creature,
For foibles one, or more of nature;
And that for ever, is no leſs,
Than cruelty to great exceſs.
" Judges of this ſoft caſt of mind,
To mercy always are inclin'd.
Happy the criminal's condition,
Were Judges of this diſpoſition;
But happier, ſure, that place muſt be,
Where murtherers grace the pillory;
Where thieves and ſodomites are whipp'd,
And traitors to plantations ſhipp'd.
Where laws like theſe ſevere are found,
Virtue of courſe muſt there abound;
There vice muſt always ſhun the light,
And roguery be diſcourag'd quite.
" But, Antigerſis, ſpeak your mind,
Could ſuch a ſcheme of mercy bind
The hand that graſps the murth'ring knife,
Which ſcorns the penalty of life?
Mercy, thus ſtrain'd, muſt needs be more a
Nuſance, than was that jilt Pandora,
Whoſe fatal box did not let looſe
More ills than this would introduce.

For ev'ry vile abomination
From hence muſt overſpread the nation;
And rapine, violence, colluſion,
Muſt all things turn into confuſion.

" Say, would you not eſteem the makers
Of ſuch vile laws, worſe than the breakers;
And hope a little more ſeverity,
Might be apply'd to this temerity;
To bring about a renovation
Of health, in this diſtemper'd nation?
And yet you are diſpleas'd, becauſe
Th' Almighty rules not by thoſe laws,
Which you condemn, and which you muſt
Arraign as partial and unjuſt.

" But legiſlators don't diſpenſe
Sanctions proportion'd to th' offence;
Much leſs, I'm ſure, from th' length of time
It took to perpetrate the crime:
Not always ſo, I mean, but chuſe
Their ſanctions from politic views;
Which ſtill to crimes that moſt perplex,
The heavieſt penalties annex.
The reaſon's plain and evident;
For if they made the puniſhment
In its duration ſtrictly fitted,
To th' time in which the fact's committed,

Offenders

Offenders would, of conſequence,
Increaſe their ſinning diligence;
Would ſin when it was in their pow'r,
Not once, but ſixty times an hour;
And this to make the bargain greater,
And bilk of pains the Legiſlator.

" Now the proportion fix'd between
The penalty annex'd, and ſin,
To juriſprudence doth pertain,
More than to juſtice, to explain.

" Murther is the moſt heinous vice,
Yet it's committed in a trice;
And th' perpetrator, you'll agree,
Commits an endleſs injury;
And yet for this, you may ſuppoſe,
If the aſſaſſin pays his noſe,
Which, in diſſection, may give more
Pain than th' murther'd perſon bore,
He makes an ample ſatisfaction,
For this irreparable action.

" And yet all nations have agreed,
The culprit's ſuff'ring ſhould exceed
The time, and be much more intenſe,
If poſſible, than th' offence.
For this, offenders frequent feel
A ling'ring death upon the wheel.

Murther, in Ruſſia, is ſo heinous,
That the aſſaſſin, inſtantaneous,
Hangs by the ribs, on hook, at top
Of pole, like beef in butcher's ſhop;
And thus for his offence atones,
A week, perhaps, in painful groans.
And, in her laws, Britannia, ſtil'd
The juſt, the merciful, and mild,
Vengeance 'gainſt this offence proclaims,
And dooms the murtherer to flames;
Yet in this act you muſt ſuppoſe,
She does with rules of juſtice cloſe.
" And though the puniſhment of deeds,
The time of acting them exceeds,
Yet none the equity deny,
Except the villains doom'd to die.
And if a crime againſt his king,
A ſubject does to ruin bring,
And from the common-wealth doth ſever
A guilty criminal for ever;
A crime 'gainſt God deſerves as well,
Eternal puniſhment in Hell.
" Beſides, if you will recollect,
How much ſome ſinners diſreſpect
Eternal torments, you'll agree,
That man, in the majority,

Would

Would not be influenc'd by, or care
For future ſuff'rings leſs ſevere.
If, therefore, ſuff'rings could be found,
That did with horror more abound,
Than vengeance of eternal fire,
'Twould thoſe, and more than thoſe, require
Effectually to aſſwage,
The wickedneſs of ev'ry age.
" It would, indeed, at juſtice ſtrike,
Were good and bad men ſerv'd alike;
Or if all ſinners, ſmall and great,
Were puniſh'd at an equal rate.
But this may well adjuſted be,
In the intenſeneſs and degree
Of ſuff'ring, without alteration,
In that conteſted point, duration.
" Thus then, in ſhort, the matter ſtands,
We break God's laws,—fall in his hands;
And therefore at his mercy lye,
Subjected to a penalty;
Which, though it be eternal flames,
'Tis what our obſtinacy claims.
" Hear what I ſay,—'Tis evident,
You'd better, than complain, repent;
'Tis frenzy, to the laſt extreme,
To trifle with the Being Supreme;

A be-

A benefactor to mal-treat,
Betrays a temper moſt ingrate;
And to provoke the ſtrongeſt foe,
Does an audacious madneſs ſhew."
Says Antigerſis, "I confeſs,
Your arguments have ſome ſucceſs.
But now, I think, it grows too late;
Let us adjourn, then, this debate
'Till three o'clock to-morrow, when,
At my houſe we will meet again;
If you can but yourſelf confine,
To one good diſh, good ale, and wine;
The beſt my table can afford,
A cordial treat, though humble board."
Piſtiſeros ſays, "I ſhall attend;
Who cannot dine thus with a friend,
Deſerves the fate of ſlaves to ſhare,
A ſparing meal, and homely fare.
"But as your early education,
Was happ'ly form'd by Revelation,
To which, you ſay, you did ſtick cloſe,
Until to manhood you aroſe;
You'll tell me, when we meet again,
By whom corrupted, how, and when."
"That I ſhall do, with great delight,
Says Antigerſis,—So good night."

The ARGUMENT *of the* NINETEENTH CANTO.

The Infidel's inſidious Wiles,
By which he thoughtleſs Youth beguiles;
As alſo the enchanting Snare
Of Beauty, in an artful Fair.

CANTO XIX.

PUNCTUAL to time Piſtiſeros came,
But found the dinner not the ſame
As was engag'd the night before,
For there was added one diſh more;
Which having din'd on to their wiſhes,
And bottles ſuperſeding diſhes,
And half a dozen beauties toaſted,
Piſtiſeros thus his friend accoſted.
" That genius ought to be extenſive,
Which always is on the defenſive;
And hitherto, you muſt agree,
The lab'ring oar has fall'n on me;
But I am infinitely pleas'd,
To find my burthen ſo much eas'd,

By that celeſtial, dawning ray
Of grace, which bodes a glorious day
Returning, of that goſpel light,
Which had not been extinguiſh'd quite.
In order then to change the theme,
For once, let me your promiſe claim,
That as ſo long of Chriſt you boaſted,
You'll ſhew how you became apoſtate."
Says Antigerſis, " this expect,
As far as I can recollect.
" I kept of ill-impreſſions clear,
Until my three and twentieth year;
And had ſo far ſubdu'd my paſſions,
You'd think I had no inclinations;
That Nature, which moſt men controul'd,
In me was languid grown and cold;
Not one ill courſe did I purſue,
Or criminal engagement knew;
When two gay friends, one a relation,
Diſguſted at my moderation,
Which made them oft uneaſy ſit,
When they would vent Atheiſtic wit;
Did ſlyly ſcheme and undertake it,
To bend my virtue or to break it;
Which they effected by that ſnare,
Which not the wiſe could ſcape—a Fair.

—A Fair,

— A Fair like Helen,—but as lewd
As Meſſalina,—yet a Prude,
Or ſeem'd as ſuch;—but one of thoſe,
Who, loving equipage and cloaths,
Would proſtitute her perſon, where
She met a rich, and am'rous heir.
" Women, in gen'ral, do inherit
More from our praiſe than their own merit,
But this moſt lovely Courtezan
Was more oblig'd t' herſelf than man.
Though envy of her perſon ſpoke,
Ev'n conſcience would the truth provoke;
And more than twice thoſe charms diſplay,
As Venus riſing from the ſea.
If friendſhip open'd in her favour,
She had more charms than th' warmeſt gave her.
In her diſtinctly you might trace,
That lower beauty of the face,
Which all the Ancients did adore,
Of which not Britain boaſts a ſcore.
Her ſtature was exact in height,
Graceful in action, and in gait.
In outward conduct ſhe obſerv'd
A humour pleaſant, yet reſerv'd;
Her ſmiles and language were expreſſive,
And wheedling both, yet not exceſſive.

In ſhort, as beauty there was ſeated,
So virtue was well perſonated.
" Miſtreſs of ev'ry tempting art,
And well inſtructed in her part,
This Syren gladly undertook,
To try, once more, her killing look;
Not with a meretricious view,
Of plund'ring if ſhe did ſubdue,
But with that female pride of ſoul,
To prove her ſway without controul.
" Engag'd one morning, by my friend,
At his aunt's houſe the night to ſpend,
Where he aſſur'd me there would be,
Of friends ſelect a company;
That there would be a pipe and tabor,
To entertain a country neighbour;
An India Captain, who acquir'd
A fortune, and from trade retir'd;
Who had one only child, a daughter,
And now to ſee the town had brought her;
And as the Lady did delight
In dancing,—ſo they'd ſpend the night.
" Delighted with the recreation,
I ſoon embrac'd the invitation,
And dreſs'd in all my airs, and coach'd,
At ſev'n the Lady's houſe approach'd.

My

My friend, whoſe gueſt I was, took care
To meet me at the loweſt ſtair,
And then conducted me two flights,
Amidſt two ranges of wax-lights.
A door capacious, where I landed,
Inſtant its tawny folds expanded;
And did, to my delight, diſcloſe
A dozen brilliant belles and beaux.
" My friend, as maſter of the revels,
From nymph to nymph politely travels;
And, with the compliments in uſe,
Did me, his friend, thus introduce.
But when we both approach'd this Fair,
Madam, ſays he, your partner's there:
I own I heard it with delight,
For I was charm'd at the firſt ſight.
" To forward this attack, ſhe wore
The ſpoils of lech'rous dupes a ſcore;
A brilliant croſs, which pendent lay
Upon her breaſt, quite loſt its ray;
This, with a penſion, a Duke gave her,
In recompence for her firſt favour.
Two diamond cluſters fill'd her ears,
An Iris in her hair appears,
By oriental rubies dy'd,
Which with the bow celeſtial vy'd.

At ev'ry ſtep ſhe did expoſe,
Upon each ſhoe a diamond roſe;
And diff'rent gems her fingers load,
All by her keeping culls beſtow'd;
Nor did her ſilk, her lawn, or lace,
Theſe coſtly ornaments diſgrace.
" As oft I ſtrove, throughout the dance,
To ſteal, ſo oft I met a glance;
And, as ſhe found a fit occaſion,
She charm'd me with her converſation;
Whether ſhe ſpoke, in ſhort, or mov'd,
I ev'ry word and act approv'd;
And when at length we came to part,
I left her miſtreſs of my heart.
" Now, for the firſt time, 'twas I found
My ſleep, before both calm and ſound,
Was hourly interrupted by
A thought perplext, and broken ſigh.
Now hope, now fear, ſucceed each other,
And their attendant frenzies ſmother.
I found her looks and acts did prove,
A ſtrong propenſity to love;
Then as an heireſs did I view her,
And thought, unleſs I could undo her,
Her father never would permit,
The knot connubial ſhould be knit.

" But conſcience now began to ſtir,
And to the treach'rous act demur;
My fancy ſaw the ſon of Boreas,
Deeming the action meritorious,
Of leaving in diſtreſs a daughter,
For a tranſgreſſion which I taught her;
And thence the lovieſt of her race,
Reduc'd to ſcandal and diſgrace.
For though to marry her I meant,
The Marriage Act would this prevent;
For till the father had conſented,
The banns would always be prevented;
She conſequently muſt endure
The flouts of a Lieutenant's whore.
" Thus was my fancy on the tenters,
When the ſame friend my chamber enters;
Whoſe introduction to this fair,
Had prov'd a well-conducted ſnare.
" He came, he ſaid, by deputation,
And brought, from's aunt, an invitation,
That I ſhould dine with her that day,
And tend the Ladies to the Play.
—Faith, Antigerſis, I ſuſpect,
You danc'd laſt night to ſome effect,
Says this ſly friend, for our relation,
Unpractis'd in diſſimulation,

Did ſev'ral times this morn declare,
You danc'd with an engaging air;
And, ſmiling, thank'd me for the favour,
Who ſuch a clever partner gave her.
" But why thoſe ſad and gloomy airs?
Have I broke in upon your pray'rs?
If ſo, I'll inſtantly retire,
But firſt your anſwer I require;
For if you don't intend to come,
Another muſt ſupply your room."
" This laſt expreſſion did alarm
My jealouſy, and paſſion warm.
" I rather danc'd too much, ſaid I,
(And then a ſoft and gentle ſigh
Incontinently 'ſcap'd my breaſt,)
Becauſe laſt night I had no reſt.
But yet the Ladies may depend,
That I will certainly attend."
" That ſigh, my friend, beſpeaks a ſmart,
Says he, that's caus'd by Cupid's dart.
I own, if any thing could move
My envy to my friend, 'tis love;
A love that meets not with diſdain,
But rather is belov'd again.
Such is your caſe, I plainly ſee;
And, if you'll place your truſt in me,

Upon my honour you ſhall find,
A faithful confidant, and kind.
O Antigerſis!—more than bleſt,
Should you be of ſuch charms poſſeſt;
Not the great Monarch of the Porte,
Nor he who rules the Perſian court,
Where beauties in perfection ſhine,
Poſſeſs, of love, a richer mine."
To this I made this frank reply,
"It is a folly to deny;
My heart would readily obey,
At her command, love's gentle ſway.
I own, of fair ones ſhe moſt fair is,
But then, my friend, ſhe is an heireſs;
And though the torch of love ſhould burn,
And find a mutual return,
Her father never would approve
The conſummation of our love;
But muſt a title have in view,
For ſo much wealth and beauty too.
Why ſhould I fondly entertain
A paſſion, then, to give me pain?
No, I will ſilently admire
Her beauty, but ſhall ſoar no higher."
"I don't, ſays he, intend to flatter,
But you are quite beſide the matter;

The Captain ſays, he has no notion,
To purchaſe for his girl promotion;
He'd give her to an honeſt porter,
If ſuch a one ſhould come to court her;
Who would retain the ſum he gave her,
Before a ſpendthrift Peer ſhould have her.
Let thoſe who will, ſuch honours ſeek,
His caſt of temper is more meek;
And him who dunn nor bailiff fears,
He thinks the worthieſt of Peers.
" So much I heard the Captain ſay,
Who ſets out for his houſe to day,
And, in a fortnight, comes to town,
To bring his pretty daughter down.
In love, a lucky moment loſt,
The lover feels it to his coſt.
To-night I'll order matters ſo,
You both ſhall in one chariot go;
The man who thus can ſteal a heart,
Knows how and when to act his part.
My aunt does always dine at two,
We'll then expect you,—ſo adieu."
" Now all my breaſt was in a rage;
And though I ſtrove to diſengage
Myſelf from this too tempting ſnare,
Alas, my friend, ſhe prov'd too fair.

The pain I heartily abhorr'd,
And yet the cauſe of it ador'd;
Yet in the height of my diſtreſs,
Had intervals of happineſs.
Stedfaſt as yet, becauſe untry'd,
Too much on virtue I rely'd;
I thought my paſſions I could ſway,
And make them decent rules obey;
But virtue, never by the beſt
Of men ſhould be put to the teſt.
The line which ſeparates between
The paths of virtue, and of ſin,
Is rather imperſpicuous by
The cleareſt caſuiſtic eye.
Then prudence bids us not to ſteer
To this ideal line too near;
Becauſe an oblique wind may ſend
Us further than we did intend.
Raſhneſs to ſoldiers don't belong,
Where once it's right, it's ten times wrong;
So confidence, in Chriſtians, muſt
Promote the fall—ev'n of the juſt;
For Peter, as the ſcriptures tell,
By his too great aſſurance fell.
"I dreſs'd with pleaſure and diſpatch,
And ev'ry minute view'd the watch;

Impatient

Impatient for a ſecond view,
I thought the hours too ſlowly flew.
At half paſt one I ſent my man,
Who inſtantly brought a ſedan;
And I immediately ſtept in it,
And kept the time within a minute.
My friend, as he had done before,
Came out, and met me at the door;
And led me to the parlour, where
His aunt, and all the ladies were.
" Dinner being o'er, my friend did gueſs,
The ladies would retire to dreſs,
Therefore intreated they'd make out,
The plan of their intended route;
But they reply'd, as they withdrew,
We'll leave the care of that to you.
" But now, adorn'd in all their airs,
They, one by one, deſcend the ſtairs;
And, all being ready, there approach
The door, two chariots, and a coach.
My friend, before he left the room,
The power aſſign'd him did aſſume;
His aunt, two ſiſters, my relation,
Were in the coach to take their ſtation;
He took upon himſelf the care,
And 'ſquireſhip of another Fair;

Then

Then did this lovely girl intreat,
That I might with her have a ſeat,
Which granted, with obliging grace,
We all proceed to take our place.
" Scarce had the chariot left the door,
Before I broke my paſſion to her;
To which ſhe modeſtly attended,
And ſeem'd nor pliant, nor offended.
From hope my paſſion fiercer burn'd,
And as we from the play return'd,
With ſo much energy I ſtrove,
To prove my ardency of love:
" That time, ſhe told me, muſt diſcover
The faithful, from the ſudden lover;
That when ſhe found I was ſincere,
She'd unreſerv'd her mind declare;
That ſhe my viſits would admit,
And I might hope, if I thought fit."
" This declaration pav'd the way,
For a third viſit the next day;
And thus by frequent viſits making,
And ev'ry time more freedoms taking,
My paſſion hence collecting ſtrength,
I plung'd in a debauch at length.
" No ſooner was the matter over,
But ſhe the ſecret did diſcover;

Told

Told who ſhe was, and what ſh' had been,
By whom engag'd to take me in;
" That hearing of my diſpoſition,
She acted merely from ambition;
And that her pride, and ſole reward,
Was but to throw me off my guard.
That ſhe herſelf had ſpent much more
Than both my friends, upon that ſcore.
She ſaid the houſe we then reſorted,
Lodg'd ſuch as in that manner ſported;
That, for her part, ſhe liv'd not there,
But had a houſe in Golden Square,
Where welcome ſhould my ſteps attend,
Not as a gallant, but a friend;
Two golden lamps are at my door,
You'll find me here, ſays ſhe, no more."
" Love's fever, which as yet did burn,
Could not ſo quick to coldneſs turn;
The loſs of beauty in poſſeſſion,
Did grieve me more than the tranſgreſſion;
Which yet my mind did not moleſt,
Nor could be brought to reaſon's teſt.
The whole diſcov'ry made me ſeem,
As rous'd from a deluſive dream,
Yet I regretted the deluſion
Was brought ſo ſoon to a concluſion.

Thus,

Thus, by impetuous paſſions won,
Luſt finiſh'd what pure love begun;
And as through confidence I fell,
Perverſeneſs prompts me to rebel;
For paſſions check'd more furious rage,
And time muſt looſe deſires aſſwage.
" But when retir'd in ſolitude,
This act in its true light I view'd,
Not by a luſtful fancy painted,
But by the worſt of evils tainted;
When I thoſe impious crimes review'd,
Which my licentious thoughts purſu'd,
And ſaw unruly paſſions rove,
Through all the wiles of treach'rous love;
When I ſurvey'd my heart, purſuing
A ſpotleſs beauty to her ruin;
Her boſom now no longer chaſte,
By me corrupted and defac'd;
Her ſex's pride, and nobleſt boaſt,
Now rifled, and for ever loſt;
And her good name to cenſure fall,
Which future virtue can't recall;
When coolly thus the act I view'd,
Repentance inſtantly enſu'd;
My conſcience ſtar'd me in the face,
And tears began to flow apace.

" But

" But when the paſt and preſent times,
My innocence, and now my crimes;
Thoſe calms which virtuous acts befriend,
And tempeſts which on vice attend;
Were painted in their native hue,
'Twas then a mental Hell I knew.
Fancy thoſe dire effects preſented
Of lawleſs love—to be prevented;
If reaſon's voice was not neglected,
And virtue properly ſuſpected.
Experience then did plainly ſhew,
The pleaſures which from ſin do flow,
Are, by a conſequential curſe,
Inadequate to the remorſe;
The firſt being as a moment's blaze,
The laſt remaining all our days,
If raging paſſions don't controul,
And ſtupify the guilty ſoul.

" My treach'rous friend, and kinſman, now
No time for ſorrow would allow;
For they who Satan's vigils keep,
To ſlumber are not prone, or ſleep;
So unexpectedly appear,
They ſaw my penitential tear;
Which ſo ſucceſsfully they chide,
That conſcience ſoon was laid aſide.

" Tears,

" Tears, ſays my friend, have no ill grace,
Upon a child's or woman's face;
For pettiſh Miſs, and humour'd Maſter,
By theſe redreſs their griefs the faſter;
And women in thoſe wants prevail,
Which can't be ſquar'd by reaſon's ſcale.
But they ſhew weakneſs in a man,
Or that his dotage he'd began.

" For once it ſeems you did miſcarry,
And ſure, *humanum eſt errare.*
In Scripture you are plainly taught,
Not e'en the Saints are free from fault;
And David, after God's own heart,
Did act a much more guilty part;
For he, in breach of regal oath,
Did whoredom act, and murder both;
Nor Bathſbeba was half ſo fair;
Repent you may—but not deſpair.
But ere you into ſorrow burſt,
Examine if you're guilty firſt;
Appeal to reaſon in the caſe,
Nor enthuſiaſtic fears embrace;
For thoſe are always in uproar,
And objects never right explore;
Like headſtrong mob they overthrow,
Without diſtinction friend and foe.

" God

" God rules not by tyrannic ſway,
For though he gives us rules t' obey,
He means not to oppreſs the creature,
Or pluck th' eſſentials out of nature.
For tell me, I beſeech you, why
Did he at firſt create the eye?
Why form'd he alſo firſt the ear,
But that to ſee, and this to hear?
Becauſe a beauteous female can,
The moſt reſolv'd of men trepan.
Are we permitted to behold,
But the decrepid and the old?
Or if the melody of ſong,
Is apt to lead the hearer wrong;
And fingers which harmonious move,
Are ſtrong provocatives to love;
Muſt we our ears with wax environ,
Ulyſſes like, t'avoid a Syren?
This would be reaſon's laws tranſgreſſing,
And turning to a curſe a bleſſing.
" Moſt certain, when the Being Supreme,
Did firſt the human ſenſes frame,
He made fit objects to excite,
And recreate them with delight;
And therefore pleaſures of the ſenſe,
Which do no hurt, give no offence.

" To

" To be enamour'd with the beauty,
And tempt a neighbour's wife from duty,
The huſband's happineſs unhinges,
And on the Decalogue infringes.
" To tempt a virgin to miſcarriage,
By treach'rous promiſes of marriage;
And when your luſt is ſatiate grown,
Deſert and throw her on the town;
To proſtitute her wretched perſon,
For bread, to ev'ry dirty whoreſon;
'Till brought to tatter'd gown and ſmock,
She dies diſtemper'd in the Lock.
Of all the deeds which men debaſe,
Which reaſon's laws ſubvert, and grace,
And which denote degen'rate times,
Theſe are the moſt enormous crimes;
And if there be a fire in Hell,
Such villainies deſerve it well.
" Your caſe with this is quite unſuited,
You neither wife nor maid polluted,
No virtue by this action dies,
Nor cauſe is given for rueful ſighs;
You've plough'd the heifer which before,
Had oft the pleaſing labour bore;
And as you found her, ſhe's the ſame,
Both in her perſon, and her fame.

O Go,

Go, viſit her again to-morrow,
You'll find no ſigns of want or ſorrow;
And as you injur'd not a creature,
By gratifying thus your nature;
Why ſhould th' Almighty be offended,
For uſing nature as intended?
" Injure no man—Obedience pay,
To your Creator ev'ry day;
Diſcharge your debts of trade and honour,
And when you've woo'd a maid and won her,
Convey her when you can to church,
And never leave her in the lurch;
This do, and never fear the rod,
Or vengeance of an incens'd God.
And if the ſchool, and nurs'ry flams,
Perplex you with conſciencious qualms;
Or if ſplenetic vapours grow,
And wormwood with your pleaſures ſow,
Read Hobbs, Spinoſa, Collins, Tindal,
For in thoſe authors you will find all
That can the human ſoul enlighten,
And will your gloomy notions brighten."
" With this religious ſyſtem ſtunn'd,
I thought at firſt he only punn'd;
And rather ſhew'd an inclination
To laugh, than vent my indignation.

I had

I had been guilty, to be ſure,
But then I could not yet endure,
To find Chriſtianity invaded,
And the Almighty thus degraded,
By thoſe who had no other cauſe,
Beſide the ſanction of his laws;
Which into dread the conſcience flings,
And fills it with remorſe and ſtings.
But yet, at their requeſt, I went,
And th' evening at a tavern ſpent;
Where nothing further did commence,
To give my tott'ring faith offence.
" If I have treſpaſs'd on your patience,
By languid and prolix relations,
'Twas you yourſelf the ſubject choſe,
From which no fruit or pleaſure flows.
We'll give the mind, then, ſome receſs,
And play a game or two at cheſs;
At ſupper you ſhall be my gueſt,
Which o'er, an hour concludes the reſt.
Piſtiſeros ſays, " Your ſtory may,
Inſtructive hints to youth convey;
I muſt confeſs it gives me pleaſure,
And therefore I'll attend your leiſure."

The ARGUMENT *of the* TWENTIETH CANTO.

The dire Effects of Virtue loſt,
With the Repentance that it coſt;
And th' eaſy Ent'rance Sin doth find,
Into a once corrupted Mind.

CANTO XX.

SUPPER being done, as 'twas agreed,
Thus Antigerſis did proceed.
" 'Tis not ſo eaſy to diveſt,
As t' uſher love into the breaſt;
And that which has the quickeſt riſe,
Requires the harſheſt remedies.
Moſt paſſions lead from prudent rules,
But this of Love makes wiſe men fools;
And ne'er ſits ſtedfaſt in its throne,
'Till reaſon's ruin'd and undone.
" Poſſeſſion did not cool, but raiſe
My paſſion to a fiercer blaze;
And as I could not follow ſenſe,
But at my conſcience's expence;

So

So whilſt in bed next morn I lay,
The doctrines of my friend I weigh,
Which firſt my warm deſires applaud,
Then fear my approbation aw'd.
" If my friend's tenets are not pure,
Yet they're convenient to be ſure;
They ample ſcope to ſenſe allow,
And conſcience make to pleaſure bow.
—Such were my thoughts—applauſe enſues,
Then I determin'd to peruſe
Thoſe books, by which I was aſſur'd,
My prejudices would be cur'd.
No harm, ſaid I, can well reſult,
Should I their principles conſult;
And if they ſatisfact'ry prove,
I then may gratify my love;
If not, I ſhall no longer trifle,
But the deſtructive paſſion ſtifle.
" Thus infidelity encroaches,
And, by degrees, makes its approaches.
" Now thus determin'd, I aroſe,
Reſolv'd, when I put on my cloaths,
To ſend my ſervant to enquire,
If it was poſſible to hire
Thoſe books, becauſe I would not buy 'em,
'Till I did read them firſt, and try 'em.

But having heard me on the floor,
My ſervant opes the chamber door,
And in his arms thoſe volumes brought,
Which now ſo eagerly I ſought,
And which my zealous friend, intent
On my converſion, juſt had ſent.

" Such diligence thoſe men beſtow,
Who on the Devil's errands go,
And ſhould the ſlothful conduct chide,
Of ſome who o'er God's flock preſide.
So Judas, when his plot was laid,
The night on which he Chriſt betray'd,
His treach'rous vigils faithful kept,
Whilſt Peter negligently ſlept.

" Determin'd all that day to read,
I ſtraight within myſelf agreed,
Let whatſoever perſon come,
My man ſhould ſay I'm not at home;
Who to that purpoſe being inſtructed,
With faithfulneſs himſelf conducted.

" The fair profeſſions, pomp of ſtile,
My baffled ſenſes firſt beguile;
But what ſtill made thoſe books more pleaſing,
Was their high eulogies on reaſon;
Which I eſteem'd the Chriſtian's pride,
And could not bear ſhould be decry'd.

Thoſe

Thoſe ſects which reaſon moſt rejected,
I found good morals moſt neglected;
And always built their ſcheme of bliſs,
Upon ſome falſe hypotheſis;
As if that faith could be evicted,
Which human reaſon contradicted.
" Such faith I call unſtudy'd will,
'Tis obſtinate, and crabbed ſtill;
On which no mortal can rely,
Unleſs his reaſon told him why:
For though I readily did allow
The deepeſt human reaſon ſhallow,
Yet thoſe whoſe ſhare of it was leaſt,
It dignify'd above the beaſt;
And whether large, or but a bit,
Yet faith could quite extinguiſh it;
And men, by faith implicit, may
The cauſe they would ſupport, betray.
Such men like hooded pidgeons fly,
And ſoar at random to the ſky,
Until perplex'd, and void of ſtrength,
They tumble to the ground at length.
" Reaſon thus deem'd our heav'nly charter,
And prejudice allow'd no quarter;
When one was prais'd, and t'other blam'd,
My mind with rapture was inflam'd.

" This is, ſaid I, to argue right,
'Tis bringing heav'nly truth to light;
This is not building upon fable,
But principles both pure and ſtable;
Conducted by this ſacred ray
Of reaſon, we can never ſtray;
Uprightneſs in its acts preſides,
No partial views its ſentence guides;
Infallible in judgment ſtill,
For truth its oracles fulfill.

" On the reverſe, our prejudice
An inlet is to ev'ry vice;
It makes us in old tales delight,
And out of cuſtom act, or ſpite;
Our nobleſt faculties doth ſhackle,
And leads us from truth's tabernacle;
And man had better have no guide,
Than this companion by his ſide.

" When Hobbs inſiſted that we might,
Look on a woman with delight;
And e'en enjoy her if we can,
Though wedded to another man,
Without a breach of ſacred laws;
And gives this reaſon for't, becauſe
This warm propenſity is found
In ev'ry nature to abound;

To mak't a ſin, then, were to ſhew man,
That he trangreſſes by being human.
" Though vile his doctrine, weak his cauſe,
Yet I receiv'd them with applauſe;
And never this applauſe ſuſpected,
As from a heart by luſt infected.
And now bewitch'd with impious rant,
I deem'd all ſober reaſon cant;
From ev'ry vaunting period flow'd,
Of cogent arguments a load;
And demonſtration plain did ſhine,
I thought, in each ſophiſtic line:
Each theſis, too, was leſs erroneous,
Than Euclid's were, or Appollonius,
And when abus'd the goſpel ſcheme,
'Twas Reaſon ſtill, and bright the theme.
Thus, by a ſtrange infatuation,
I took for Reaſon, Inclination.
" So vice the boſom taints with venom,
And doth the powers of reaſon benumb;
Whilſt wicked men are moſt inclin'd,
To boaſt a more enlighten'd mind;
But when thoſe landſcapes we come near,
Of wit and reaſon they appear
To be but artifice, and ſhade,
Which diſtance a huge mountain made.

" Thus

" Thus taught religion to abandon,
All authors I could lay my hand on,
No matter how obſcure and vile,
How blaſphemous, and low the ſtile,
From grov'ling Chubb, to fam'd St. John,
I bought, I borrow'd, and did con.
From theſe I cull'd, with diligence,
Of impious wit the quinteſſence;
Which in a pocket-book I ſtore,
To help my memory the more.
And as in coffee-houſe I ſaw,
An apoſtolic Deiſt draw
A crowd of giddy youth about him,
Who an excellent genius thought him,
Whilſt he did place in ridicule,
The Evangelic Faith and Rule;
And ſtrove the human mind to free,
From dread of a futurity:
Of being eſteem'd a wit, th' ambition,
Led me to enter on that miſſion;
And fraught with irreligious pride,
My new acquir'd genius try'd.
" This Deiſt abſent, I aſſume
His province, in the coffee-room;
And try'd to prove, by plain deductions,
That Mahomet's ſupreme inſtructions,

A wiſe

A wiſe man would much rather chuſe,
Than thoſe of Chriſtians or of Jews:
But being in this attempt defeated,
In much confuſion I retreated;
And meditating when alone,
The cauſe of my being overthrown,
Rather than blame the ſubject, choſe
T' admit it from my weakneſs roſe.
" But gathering daily a ſupply,
From books of infidelity;
And center'd in a novice gang,
I ventur'd boldly to harangue.
My ſubject was the ſaucy pride
Of Biſhops, and each ſpiritual guide:
That theſe, as Lords, were a dead weight,
On the Court ſide, againſt the State;
For being ambitious ſtill to climb,
They with the Prince's meaſures chime;
Or having reach'd the higheſt place,
As Becket did, fly in his face.
That thoſe of the inferior claſſes,
Were either canting knaves, or aſſes;
Who by their holy flams delude,
The low unthinking multitude;
Or elſe their feeble cauſe betray,
To thoſe who have read more than they.

Such were the heads, and ſuch the force,
Of my firſt infidel diſcourſe;
The ſubject, though 'twas ſtale and trite,
Being declamation, gave delight;
And nods of approbation ſhew'd,
My labour not in vain beſtow'd.
" And now with my ſucceſs delighted,
I thought myſelf compleatly knighted;
And did as great a pother keep,
As he who once ſubdu'd the ſheep;
And was as far in lewdneſs gone,
As in knight-errantry that Don.
And as the Curate and the Barber,
Did find Don Quixot's cloſet harbour
Authors of no diſtinguiſh'd note,
But what did chivalry promote;
So had ſuch friends examin'd mine,
They'd meet the works of no Divine;
No Lawyer there, or fam'd Phyſician,
Hiſtorian, or Mathematician;
Nor could a volume there be found,
Or ſtitch'd in ſheets, or neatly bound;
But ſuch as in the reading muſt
Foment impiety, or luſt.
In this my catalogue was large,
As Spaniſh Knight's—and great the charge.

" Now

" Now elevated in conceit,
No more I dreaded a defeat;
And having got a freſh recruit
Of blaſphemy, again diſpute;
And, by low wit excited, buckled,
To prove that Joſeph was a cuckold.
But here, as ſoon as I begun,
Some hooted, and ſome from me run;
None of my audience being ſo far
Advanc'd in wickedneſs, to dare
Admit a notion, which, not true,
Celeſtial vengeance muſt purſue.
" But a ſtaunch Deiſt, who ſtood by,
And ſaw ſome hoot, and others fly,
Said I miſtook the matter quite,
And thus could never proſelyte.
Such blunt profanity muſt fail us,
Quod nemo ſit repente malus;
That Chriſtians did not thus ſubdue men,
But had their diff'rent *Catechumen*;
Had their *Electi*, *Competentes*,
Subſtratores, and *Audientes*;
All which were different degrees
Of ſtudents in their fopperies,
And Paul, whoſe policy was great,
Fed babes with milk, but men with meat.

Beſides,

Beſides, the proverb plainly ſhews,
A man muſt creep before he goes;
Then let us by ſuch rules proceed,
Not hope at once to damn the creed.
What you'd maintain, advance with doubt,
And, if approv'd, then make it out;
But ſtill a veneration ſhew,
For what you mean to overthrow,
Becauſe the more you hide the hook,
The ſurer is the gudgeon took;
And thoſe who've argued on our ſide
With moſt ſucceſs, this method try'd.
" I own I much approv'd th' advice,
But then I could not be ſo nice;
Neither my patience, nor my wit,
Would ſuch a ſolemn farce admit.
I never could my views enſconce,
But enter'd on the point at once;
Eſteeming it a truth ſublime,
Procraſtination murthers time.
So as a re-reformer choſe,
At once my doctrines to diſcloſe;
Could neither ſtint nor ſtarve the cauſe,
But merit, and enjoy applauſe.
" Now was I daily on the tenters,
In ſeeking out ſome new adventures;

Where'er

Where'er I was, whate'er the topic,
The ſcene though north or ſouth of Tropic,
Without propriety regarding,
Or common decency a farthing,
Upon Religion I'd begin,
And draw it, neck and ſhoulders, in.
" Two evening hours, from five to ſeven,
Each day t' a coffee-houſe were giv'n,
Where frequent opportunities
T' exert my talents did ariſe.
One ev'ning, o'er my coffee fixt,
With ſtrangers and acquaintance mixt,
The ſubject of the table ran,
In praiſe of that brave Corſican,†
Whoſe gen'rous ſoul true freedom warms,
And ardent heroes leads to arms ;
Their rights to guard, and trade reſtore,
Which ſunk beneath oppreſſive pow'r.
Alas ! ſays one, thoſe noble works
Are ſoil'd, by calling in the Turks,
Whoſe creſcent, whereſoe'er it's ſpread,
The Chriſtian droops his rev'rend head.
Thus fir'd with rage, and madly brave,
He'll ruin what he meant to ſave ;
For where the Turk obtains command,
Freedom and Truth deſert the land ;

† Pascal Paoli

The

The Koran ſilences the Bible,
That as divine, and this a libel.
May Heav'n avert this dread preſage,
Such councils thwart, confound ſuch rage!
" Have you, ſaid I, the Koran read,
Which thus you ſlight, and ſo much dread?
Or do you think the Patriot's fire,
Which does Paoli's breaſt inſpire,
Should not in prudent councils ſhare
A part as glorious as in war?
That what is in the battle won,
Is by his politics undone?
That either he, or his adviſer,
From your opinions could grow wiſer;
The Turks and they are neighb'ring ſtates,
Which familiarity creates;
I fancy, then, you will agree,
They know the Turks as well as we;
And if they find their Chriſtian maſters
Bring on their groaning ſtate diſaſters,
And Chriſtian Princes are abettors,
In rivetting their ſlaviſh fetters,
Why may they not to Turks apply,
For that which Chriſtian ſtates deny.
" Religion is an idle ſtory,
A clog, and not a ſpur to glory;

Was

Was it by Corſicans regarded,
They'd ſtill with fetters be rewarded;
Whereas by treaties they might gain
Relief from their oppreſſive chain,
Which will moſt certain be the caſe,
If th' Turkiſh treaty ſhould take place.
But then the Goſpel, you will ſay,
Muſt to the Alcoran give way:
Suppoſe it does—they change one brother
And holy prophet for another.
" Here from the point in hand I ſtarted,
And my abilities exerted,
To prove not only Turk and Jew,
But alſo Chriſt's diſciples too,
A ſet of implicit believers,
Impos'd upon by three deceivers.
Toland in this was my beſt friend,
And Woolſton did aſſiſtance lend;
But Warburton and Sherlock quoted,
This bold poſition antidoted,
And I a confutation bore
More ſhameful than the one before,
And had recourſe, in my behalf,
To ſtrep'rous peals of a horſe-laugh:
But canvaſſing the matter over,
I evidently did diſcover

The Koran ſilences the Bible,
That as divine, and this a libel.
May Heav'n avert this dread preſage,
Such councils thwart, confound ſuch rage!
" Have you, ſaid I, the Koran read,
Which thus you ſlight, and ſo much dread?
Or do you think the Patriot's fire,
Which does Paoli's breaſt inſpire,
Should not in prudent councils ſhare
A part as glorious as in war?
That what is in the battle won,
Is by his politics undone?
That either he, or his adviſer,
From your opinions could grow wiſer;
The Turks and they are neighb'ring ſtates,
Which familiarity creates;
I fancy, then, you will agree,
They know the Turks as well as we;
And if they find their Chriſtian maſters
Bring on their groaning ſtate diſaſters,
And Chriſtian Princes are abettors,
In rivetting their ſlaviſh fetters,
Why may they not to Turks apply,
For that which Chriſtian ſtates deny.
" Religion is an idle ſtory,
A clog, and not a ſpur to glory;

Was

Was it by Corſicans regarded,
They'd ſtill with fetters be rewarded;
Whereas by treaties they might gain
Relief from their oppreſſive chain,
Which will moſt certain be the caſe,
If th' Turkiſh treaty ſhould take place.
But then the Goſpel, you will ſay,
Muſt to the Alcoran give way:
Suppoſe it does—they change one brother
And holy prophet for another.
" Here from the point in hand I ſtarted,
And my abilities exerted,
To prove not only Turk and Jew,
But alſo Chriſt's diſciples too,
A ſet of implicit believers,
Impos'd upon by three deceivers.
Toland in this was my beſt friend,
And Woolſton did aſſiſtance lend;
But Warburton and Sherlock quoted,
This bold poſition antidoted,
And I a confutation bore
More ſhameful than the one before,
And had recourſe, in my behalf,
To ſtrep'rous peals of a horſe-laugh:
But canvaſſing the matter over,
I evidently did diſcover

My principles without foundation,
Or I was weak in diſputation,
Becauſe I no ſucceſs could have
But with a blockhead or a knave.
Upon the latter I conclude,
And now determin'd to be rude,
And when I met a Parſon, noſe him,
To ſneers and ridicule expoſe him;
Or, if he would not be the butt,
To baniſh him with oaths and ſmut.
This conduct, in a month or leſs,
Was crown'd with excellent ſucceſs,
For in that time, I'm well perſuaded,
I half a dozen Prieſts degraded,
And from a turtle baniſh'd three,
By dint of blunt obſcenity.

"But fortune, in an evil hour,
One evening dogged grew, and ſour,
Did her ſucceſsful ſon betray,
And threw a Tartar in my way.
As I was ſeated o'er my coffee
I meditated a freſh trophy,
For I a Prieſt at diſtance ſpied,
With diſh of coffee by his ſide,
Who ſtrove, through aged eyes, to pore
And con the daily papers o'er.

"You

" You ſee that rev'rend don, ſays I,
(To ſome acquaintance who ſtood by;)
Take notice, and I'll ſhew you fun,
I'll make him from this moment ſhun
A coffee-houſe, and read the news
At beer-houſe fire, as Porters uſe.
" Soon as I did my purpoſe mention,
And drew upon me their attention,
In mood as grave as I was able,
I fix'd myſelf at th' Parſon's table,
Who, ſeeing ſuch a ſpruce young 'Squire
Beſide him ſeated, mov'd up higher,
Through complaiſance, I did preſume,
That I might have ſufficient room.
I call'd for coffee---This I got,
Which being, as I ſuppoſe, too hot,
I turn'd it in the ſaucer, then
Return'd it in the cup again,
In doing which it was my care
The table ſhould have ample ſhare:
The Parſon's coat was raven grey,
The ſkirt of which beſide me lay,
I took it very arch and ſly,
And with it rubb'd the table dry.
The Doctor ſtill continu'd reading,
Seem'd ignorant of my proceeding,

And ſat, without the leaſt emotion,
As if he'd been at his devotion.
The coffee-houſe being all intent,
Impatient alſo for th' event;
I was at this ſupineneſs vext,
And thinking how t' affront him next,
When in a ſolemn voice I hear,
—Freſh coffee, boy,—and th' Gazetteer.
The waiter brought a ſmoaking diſh,
The prieſt o'erſets it, and cries—piſh;
And then, to recompence my rigg,
He ſnatches from my head my wig,
And gravely wipes up all the ſlop,
Not leaving e'en a ſingle drop;
Then plac'd it, without ſmile or frown,
Like dirty diſhclout, on my crown.
On this a monſtrous roar enſu'd,
From the attentive multitude;
With hoots attended, and with hiſſes,
As when his part Jack-Pudding miſſes.
"So much from this rebuff I bore,
I ne'er ſuch wit attempted more;
And ſhortly after 'twas my luck,
To be with purple fever ſtruck;
When the Phyſician gave me over,
And told me,—Sir, you can't recover.

Impatience and detraction flow'd,
From what the Doctor did forebode;
I ſaw from death I could not fly,
Yet dreaded horribly to die;
My conſcious thoughts fly in my face,
And all my crimes before me place;
I ſtarted at the dreadful view,
And pangs that haunt the damn'd I knew.
Alas! there is a God I cry'd,
Whoſe righteous laws I did deride;
Who now will puniſh me, if I
Should i pious and obdurate die;
Then from his juſtice I'll petition,
Unto his mercy, with contrition.
And this I did with ſo much zeal,
And did ſuch true compunction feel,
As did ſome pleaſing hopes create,
And reconcil'd me to my fate.
" God pleas'd with my repentance, granted
What I deſpair'd to aſk, though wanted;
And did, in his good time, reſtore
My health, as perfect as before.
But I, like thoughtleſs men, too ſoon,
Deſpiſs'd this undeſerved boon;
And though I never could deny
God's providential rule, yet I

So far relaps'd, I doubted ſtill,
If God, through Chriſt, reveal'd his will;
And that becauſe this ſcheme of grace
Varies, in ev'ry ſect, its face;
Which I ſuppoſe could never be,
If ſprung from the Divinity.
Muſt therefore beg, now I have done,
You'll finiſh what you have begun;
Shew me if the Almighty granted,
Or if the world in gen'ral wanted,
As a refinement of behaviour,
The Revelation of our Saviour?
And as it's mixt with tenets ſpurious,
Shew what is right, and what injurious."
Piſtiſeros ſays, " I ſhall impart
My thoughts upon't, with all my heart;
But this I chuſe to do by letter,
'Twill help your memory the better,
And now, my friend, we'll bid good night;
—May both of us, at length, be right!"

CANTO XXI.

Dear FRIEND,

THAT Nature's laws invariably are right,
And men can know them by their nat'ral light,
Is a poſition Deiſts would make out,
Though pregnant with uncertainty and doubt;
They beg the queſtion, and from thence maintain,
Chriſtianity ſuperfluous is, and vain.
I'll grant the tenet though, and we'll ſuppoſe,
That health from exerciſe and temp'rance roſe;
That obſervation and experience bind
This rule, without exception, on mankind;
Therefore, if the deiſtic rule is pure,
Man needs no doctor, for he needs no cure:
Ne'er was concluſion more prepoſt'rous known,
Yet whilſt a Deiſt, this muſt be your own.
But not to mark hereditary ill,
As man's an agent free, uncurb'd by will,
He may his health impair, if ſo inclin'd,
Infect his body, or corrupt his mind;
When, notwithſtanding this complete poſition,
He'll want, in both theſe caſes, a Phyſician;

For if our bodies, when diſtemper'd, claim
The Doctor's aid—our ſouls may do the ſame.
When the Redeemer of mankind appear'd
On his celeſtial errand, he declar'd
To call the righteous was not his intent,
But rather lead the ſinners to repent;
Becauſe no phyſic with the whole agrees,
But thoſe who labour under ſome diſeaſe.
I muſt confeſs, that the deiſtic tribe,
Sorrow for mental maladies preſcribe;
And ſay repentance being in all mens reach,
Does all pretence to ſpir'tual cures impeach.
But though the light of nature ſhould excite,
Some pleaſing hopes that penitence was right;
Yet what effect ſhould from that action flow,
No mortal in a nat'ral ſtate could know;
And if repentance could not health enſure,
But was a doubtful and defective cure,
'Till revelation ſhot its glorious ray,
Did both Phyſician and the cure diſplay:
This dubious proſpect might, of conſequence,
Provoke the Sinner to impenitence.
That Nature is ſufficiently benign,
I'll grant for once, and with ſuch blaze doth ſhine,
That like a clear and elevated light,
Deſign'd for wand'ring mariners at night,

If

If cloſe attended to will prove a guide,
That ſeldom errs, or leads mankind aſide.
But if a miſt obſcures it from our eyes,
And vagrant meteor ſhould before us riſe,
By this vile *ignis fatuus* miſled,
We plunge into the regions of the dead.
Not only in the night, but blaze of day,
A giddy traveller may loſe his way;
Deluſive objects may around him throng,
And lead him from the right road to the wrong;
Or elſe detain him in one pleaſing ſpot,
'Till both his journey and his road's forgot.
Muſt all advice and all aſſiſtance prove,
In ſuch a caſe, officious acts of love?
Or, rather, would it not a friendſhip be,
Either to rouſe him from his lethargy,
Or gently lead him by the hand, to where
He loſt his road, and firſt began to err?
And ſhould this faithful monitor, intent
Delays to check, and errors to prevent,
To this incautious traveller diſplay,
His bus'neſs would admit of no delay;
But diligence and expedition claim'd
A mind with vigour both, and zeal inflam'd.
Should he, this trifling humour to ſuppreſs,
And give him ſtrong aſſurance of ſucceſs,

Declare

Declare that he would act ſo much his friend,
As to aſſiſt him to his journey's end,
And undertake, if he his part would do,
To carry him all difficulties through,
Could offices of friendſhip, ſuch as theſe,
Be uſeleſs deem'd,—or ſuch a friend diſpleaſe?
But ſhould preſumption lead him to reject
This friend's advice, and treat him with neglect;
Should he declare, like an ungrateful elf,
He knew his bus'neſs, and the road himſelf;
That having light ſufficient on his hand,
He did in need of no aſſiſtance ſtand;
At his own time, would his own meaſures trace,
Nor ſtir, 'till he thought proper, from that place.
This man is doubly loſt, ſure all muſt ſay;
Has loſt his wits, as well as loſt his way.
" Who weighs this caſe exactly, he will find,
'Tis fairly applicable to mankind.
Reaſon, the Deiſt's polar-ſtar, and pride,
Its ſplendor loſt, and prov'd a faithleſs guide;
Or elſe, by paſſion ſway'd, its influence ceas'd,
And in his acts converted man to beaſt.
Hence vice to that enormous height was grown,
As burn'd four cities, and the world did drown;
Which made th' Almighty find occaſion ſtill,
At diff'rent periods to reveal his will.

And

And where's th' abſurdity, if we ſuppoſe
Celeſtial goodneſs ſtill expedients choſe,
To lead mankind, without compulſive ſway,
From realms of darkneſs, to the realms of day?
That he ſhould prompt them vicious acts t' eſchew,
By motives ſtronger than they ever knew?
And, by his mercies unexpected, ſhou'd
Excite their wonder and their gratitude?
That he a law ſhould give, with wiſdom fraught,
And prompt t' obey, by doing what he taught,
And ſhould ſo gently influence the ſoul,
As might convert, yet not the will controul.

To ſhew theſe means ſuperfluous and unfit,
Exert your relics of deiſtic wit;
But if with me you can be ſatisfy'd,
That God thoſe methods has for ever try'd,
Which moſt to happineſs and virtue lead,
Revere the goſpel, and retain your creed.

For ſearch the Chriſtian Revelation through,
This its connexion is, and this its view.
Thoſe controverſies which from caſuiſts flow'd,
And want foundation in the Chriſtian code,
Let thoſe, who can, their excellencies tell,
I think they ſerve no cauſe but that of hell;
For where men ſtickle moſt for myſteries,
The moral virtue droops her head, and dies.

As far as we can go by reaſon's light,
We are commanded, and it muſt be right;
To trace the ſpirit through the ſacred line,
That doctrines true, we may from falſe define.
But then what God from reaſon has conceal'd,
And would a ſecret be, unleſs reveal'd,
That reaſon which our Maker did afford,
Prompts us to take it on our Maker's word;
Who holds an inqueſt, then, on theſe, offends;
And God would fruſtrate in his ſacred ends.

So have I known, by ſickneſs chain'd t' his bed,
A wight, by curious diſpoſition led,
Dive in his neighbour's ſecrets, ſmall and great,
Or ſtrive t' explore the cabinet of ſtate;
The humble cottage muſt, and throne direct,
And what concerns him moſt, does moſt neglect;
Deep ſunk in his own troubled waves, he's curſt,
Like Tantalus, with a perpetual thirſt.

Some heavenly lights immenſely diſtant lie,
Seem twinkling tapers to the naked eye,
But by the help of teleſcope brought near,
Encreaſe in magnitude, and ſhine more clear;
Juſt ſo, in diff'rent ſplendor, truths divine,
Through reaſon's lens, and revelation ſhine.

What

What grov'ling thoughts of the Supreme were known,
Whilſt men were led by reaſon's light alone?
For thoſe diſcov'ries which ſome ſophiſts made,
Were faint at beſt, invelop'd too in ſhade;
Vague as they were, ev'n thoſe to cells confin'd,
Like Monkiſh rites, were hid from all mankind.
Read, and you'll find where'er a nation ſpread,
Idolatry its baleful influence ſhed;
And hell, by faithful miſſionaries gain'd
Whole votive colonies, and ſway maintain'd.
From hence Adrammalec firſt took his riſe,
And all the tribe of Ethnic deities;
When Dagon, Moloch, Aſhtaroth, and Bell,
Inveigled nations, and repleniſh'd hell;
When brutes were gods, or unto gods ally'd;
When leeks and cabbages were deify'd,
Heaven, jealous of its right, did interfere,
And rais'd, from time to time, ſome rev'rend ſeer,
With light celeſtial to aſſert its laws,
Expoſe their errors, and promote its cauſe.
Iſaiah firſt this heav'nly light diſplays,
Then Jeremiah truths divine conveys;
Ezekiel next tunes the prophetic lyre,
Then Daniel glows with the ſeraphic fire.

Theſe,

Theſe, as the major Prophets, have I nam'd,
The minor too their heavenly truths proclaim'd;
By diff'rent cauſes led, each in his turn,
Did Iſrael threaten, and their errors mourn;
But men in treſpaſs obſtinate diſown'd
Their ſacred titles, and their perſons ſton'd;
'Till Chriſt th' enlightning beams of Heav'n convey'd,
When tribes on tribes the force of truth obey'd.
And now, behold thoſe conquer'd gods are flown,
And their Creators ruin'd and undone;
Moloch no more the parents fears alarms,
No infant victims fill his flaming arms;
No drums are heard, nor ſtentrophonic tones,
To drown the mother's ſhrieks, and infant's groans.
No more the Delphic Oracle is heard,
Nor Sibyls now conſulted and rever'd;
But all to their infernal dwellings fled,
Their flock deſerted as the Goſpel ſpread.
See Chubb a ſhrewd Philoſopher become,
Who'd been a blockhead born in ancient Rome;
Who, without half the gifts of nature, knows
What Plato's genius never could diſcloſe.
Extract two thouſand years from th' preſent date,
And the beſt writings of that age tranſlate;

Select

Select the brighteſt hints in all you find,
And in one volume be thoſe hints combin'd;
In Woolaſton all nature's light appears,
More bright and full than in thoſe diſtant years;
For more than reaſon e'er before had known
Of God, is there diſplay'd and clearly ſhewn;
There boaſted reaſon, a ſublimer plan
Than e'er before was form'd, has ſet for man.
— Say, what's the cauſe? — Was Plato void of thought?
Was Tully's wiſdom without ſtudy got?
Did Plutarch want a penetrating wit?
Was Solon but a mean illit'rate cit?
No, Woolaſton more happy was in boon,
More helps he had than they who liv'd ſo ſoon;
Had free acceſs to revelation's code,
And ancient errors thence he learn'd t' explode.
But yet it ſeems you ſtill are at a loſs,
T' extract what's pure Chriſtianity from droſs,
And therefore you requeſt that I ſhould ſhew,
Thoſe doctrines which from revelation flow.
I hope you mean not that I ſhould rehearſe,
The moral precepts found in ev'ry verſe;
Which muſt epiſtolary bounds exceed,
And all may know them who the goſpel read.

Or

Or elſe, derogatory to the reſt,
You'd have me ſhew what ſect of all's the beſt.
To this no creature hath the leaſt pretence,
It is the province of omniſcience.
Perfection muſt not in a ſect be ſought,
Each hath its excellence, and each its fault;
And that which beſt promotes the goſpel ſcheme,
Unto perfection hath the faireſt claim.
This glorious ſcheme, in ev'ry part deſign'd
T' improve the talents, and enlarge the mind,
Teaches thoſe virtues which do man adorn,
And all degrading actions prompts to ſcorn;
With god-like wiſdom doth the ſoul impreſs,
And ev'ry grace that leads to happineſs;
Inculcates charity, compaſſion moves,
And all returns of wrong throughout diſproves;
Does each extravagance of paſſion kill,
And curbs th' irregularities of will;
Permits thoſe pleaſures, which do not unhinge
Our virtue, nor our peace of mind infringe;
Gives us a mild and gracious caſt of mind,
Calm in itſelf, and loving to mankind;
Expels thoſe fears which doubtful minds diſtract,
And leads with freedom both to think and act;
A right conception gives, and lively ſenſe
Of the Almighty, and his providence;

The

The ſoul in its juſt ſov'reignty ſecures,
And reaſon ſtrengthens 'gainſt all worldly lures;
Condemns preſumption, ſtubborneſs, and heat,
Murther, intemp'rance, fraud, and ſelf-conceit;
In ſhort, that conduct which from men we chuſe,
We're there enjoin'd to all mankind to uſe.
Such is the moral ſyſtem Chriſt has brought,
Excelling all the ancient Sages taught;
And thoſe with ſuch prevailing motives preſt,
As never Ethics could before ſuggeſt.
The ſtoic motives to be juſt, were built
On virtue's beauty, and foul looks of guilt;
But where's the man amongſt a thouſand, who
For ſuch a motive would a luſt ſubdue?
The vulgar ne'er would appetite controul,
From ſuch a generoſity of ſoul;
And thoſe of rank, to luxury inclin'd,
To philoſophic thoughts ſcarce turn their mind;
Th' impulſe of paſſion, and the blood inflam'd,
By phyſic reaſons ſeldom are reclaim'd.
Hence Ariſtotle aſcertains a rule,
Youth ſhould abſcond the philoſophic ſchool;
For wav'ring fancy, and affections looſe,
Render the rules of virtue of ſmall uſe;
But when the paſſions cool, (proceeds this ſage,)
And boilings of the blood ſubſide by age;

This is the proper ſeaſon to prepare
The ſoil, and ſow the ſeeds of virtue there.
Such doctrines did this famous ſage diſpenſe,
With blunder pregnant, more than common ſenſe;
All virtuous acts he makes from prudence flow,
And man, he ſays, by age muſt prudent grow;
Ere he advantage from their ſchools obtains,
Muſt prudent be, before he prudence gains.
But whether age, or in the youthful prime,
For planting virtue is the propereſt time,
Let thoſe the queſtion put who're not agreed,
If men in ſpring or autumn ſow their ſeed.
The motives to be good which Chriſt laid down,
Are fitted equally to peer and clown;
By threats of Hell the youthful blood is chill'd,
And the offending ſoul with horror fill'd;
Whilſt in another life the hopes of bliſs,
Lead men to ſlight the tranſient joys of this.
In ſhort, my friend, if you the Bible read,
You'll find the Chriſtian rules as far exceed
The lectures of Lycæum, or the Porch,
As tapers are eclips'd by blaze of torch.
Unto thoſe rules of manners Chriſt has linkt,
A mode of faith, both ſtable and ſuccinct;
—A point ſublime, that will no comment bear,
As it exceeds our comprehenſive ſphere.

That

That Chriſt is of the living God the Son,
Was Martha's Creed, and Chriſtians now muſt own,
This is the rock which has the church ſuſtain'd,
And by this faith ſalvation is obtain'd;
Peter for early owning this was bleſt;
For this the thief did enter into reſt;
This to eſtabliſh was the chief intent,
Of all the writers of the Teſtament;
No eloquence does more than this profeſs,
Nor no ſimplicity believeth leſs;
And though they do in flow of words exceed,
The ſubſtance is the ſame in ev'ry creed.
If we beſides do ſtedfaſtly expect,
That God will all his promiſes effect,
This will complete our faith, and nothing leave,
That we ſhould hope for more, or more believe;
And if with works we do this faith adorn,
We ſhall be heirs of bliſs, as ſure as born.
All the Moſaic rites Chriſt did ſubdue,
And inſtituted in their room but two;
The one is an initiating rite,
The other Chriſtians doth with Chriſt unite;
And theſe as Sacraments denoted are,
To which we're bound in duty to adhere;

All other rites from human prudence riſe,
And their ſignificance in notion lies;
But thoſe, with all mankind, you have a claim,
T' approve as proper, or improper blame.
Then let thoſe doctrines which the church divide,
By the criterion attributes be try'd.
If one maintains God's abſolute decrees,
Obſerve if mercy with this ſcheme agrees;
If there are few with heavenly grace ſupply'd,
Let this opinion be with juſtice try'd;
If human freedom is by fate reſtrain'd,
Let this by God's compaſſion be arraign'd;
And by thoſe methods you will ſoon detect,
What's proper to embrace, and what reject.
Since then the Chriſtian ſcheme does beſt diſplay,
To happineſs the moſt compendious way;
Since here a healing remedy is found,
For all the ills that human life ſurround;
Since hence, in ev'ry danger, ſafety's brought,
And a relief to agonizing thought;
Since comfort ſprings from hence in want of health,
And beſt advice is found for men of wealth;
And if the days of poverty advance,
It gives us hopes of a deliverance;
In ſhort, ſince here thoſe qualities preſide,
Which rule our reaſon, and affections guide,

We plainly ſee where our true intereſt lies,
And therefore ſhould the arts of vice deſpiſe.
Thus you've a ſhort but comprehenſive view,
Of what a Chriſtian ſhould believe, and do;
May doubts from Infidelity decay,
And may this faith your future conduct ſway;
'Twill ſolid comfort in this life procure,
And in the next eternal bliſs enſure.

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